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MOORES CREEK NATIONAL MILITARY PARK
NORTH CAROLINA

THE BATTLE OF MOORES CREEK BRIDGE

by

Charles E. Hatch Jr.

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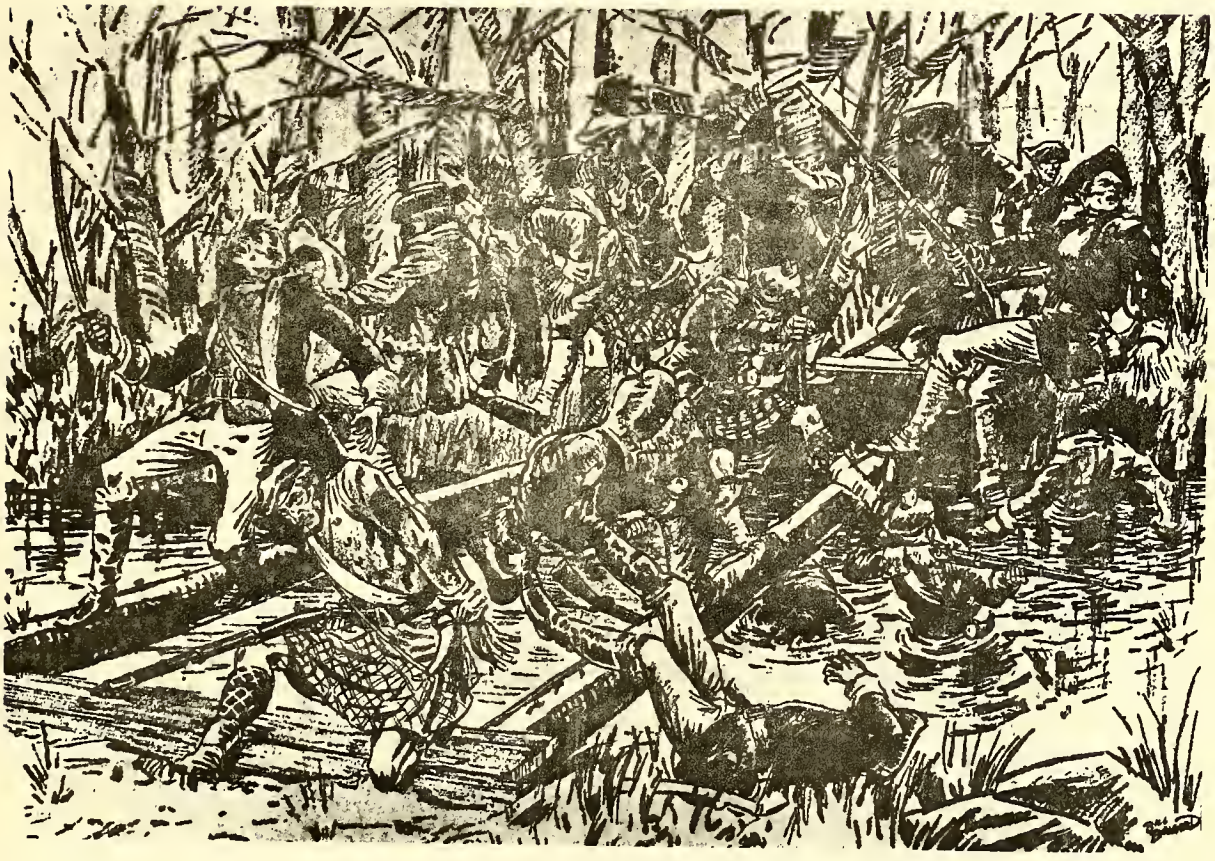

Office of History and Historic Architecture
Eastern Service Center
Washington, D.C.
December 1969

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

PB-201 938

BIBLIOGRAPHIC DATA SHEET	1. Report No. FNP-HH-71-73	2.	3. Recipient's Accession No.

4. Title and Subtitle

THE BATTLE OF MOORES CREEK BRIDGE

5. Report Date Approved: December 1969

6.

7. Author(s)

Charles E. Hatch, Jr.

8. Performing Organization Rept. No. FNP-HH-71-73

9. Performing Organization Name and Address

U.S. Division of History
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation
801 19th Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20006

10. Project/Task/Work Unit No. Special Study

11. Contract/Grant No.

12. Sponsoring Organization Name and Address

U.S. Department of the Interior
National Park Service
Washington, D.C. 20240

13. Type of Report & Period Covered General History

14.

15. Supplementary Notes

16. Abstracts

This report deals with the engagement between patriot and loyalist forces some 20 miles from Wilmington, North Carolina, February 27, 1776, which was a fatal blow to the opening British campaign in the American Revolution. The broad British plan was shaped to utilize what was assumed to be a great body of loyalist sentiment among the residents of the Southern colonies. The account details the battle, its background and aftermath. The study also emphasizes the deeds and events that made Moores Creek National Military Park the national historical shrine that it is today. The report makes available, as appendices the more significant contemporary battle accounts, including the manuscript "A Narrative of the Proceedings of a Body of Loyalists in North Carolina." It includes a bibliography, The Moores Creek Bridge Campaign map and thirteen illustrations.

17. Key Words and Document Analysis. 17a. Descriptors

*National Parks
History
Revolutionary War
Loyalists
Reviews

17b. Identifiers/Open-Ended Terms

*Moores Creek National Military Park
Currie
Pender County
North Carolina

17c. COSATI Field/Group 5D

18. Availability Statement	19. Security Class (This Report)	21. No. of Pages
Available from: National Technical Information Service, 5285 Port Royal Road, Springfield, Virginia 22151	UNCLASSIFIED	125
	20. Security Class (This Page) UNCLASSIFIED	22. Price PC$3.00/$.95

FORM NTIS-35 (10-70)

USCOMM-DC 40329-P71

Cq7.3
H36b

FOREWORD

The first broad plan of British action at the outbreak of the American Revolution was projected to utilize a suspected mass loyalty of the residents in the Southern Colonies, particularly in the Carolinas. This called for "the rising" of a loyalist army in North Carolina timed to cooperate with a British expedition dispatched to the lower Cape Fear River area. The loyalists rose and directed their course to the sea, but were opposed by a patriot army which met them at Moores Creek Bridge on the road to Wilmington. On February 27, 1776, the loyalist force was humiliatingly and completely defeated in the first clear victory of American arms in the struggle for independence.

The battle quickly became known as the "Lexington and Concord of the South." Its effect was electric and its consequences far-reaching. This clear-cut triumph was unique in that in one resounding victory a real threat to the subjugation of North Carolina was eliminated, a British-loyalist combination of much greater potential was thwarted, American patriotism and spirit were stimulated to new heights, and new determining forces for the independence movement were generated--a movement that resulted in the Declaration of Independence.

This is the story with which this account deals. Its purpose is to emphasize the deeds and events that made Moores Creek National Military Park a national historic shrine and to explain why they came

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about and what effect they had.

This manuscript, prepared largely as a labor of love by the author, was in the main completed several years ago. Though not documented in the customary research report manner, it is based on rather intensive research. The more significant contemporary battle accounts (which are limited in number and not of ready access) are included as appendices. Other sources on which this narrative draws are listed in the Bibliography. With the approach of the American Revolution's Bicentennial, this account seems particularly pertinent at this time.

Yorktown, Virginia — Charles E. Hatch, Jr.

December 10, 1969

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Map The Moores Creek Bridge Campaign

The Moores Creek Bridge Campaign

When on January 10, 1776, Josiah Martin, royal governor of North Carolina, issued a proclamation from the safety of a British warship off the Cape Fear and called on all loyal subjects of the Colony to rise "unite and suppress the rebellion" in the province, he was implementing carefully laid plans for the return of the Colony and the South to British control. This action triggered the campaign that led to the Battle of Moores Creek Bridge on February 27, 1776. Both victor and vanquished had reason for hope as the decisive battle opened. The engagement was short, yet much that motivated leaders and soldiers alike that day had long been in the making.

Sectionalism and Regulators in North Carolina

Sectionalism developed in many of the colonies in the colonial period, but perhaps nowhere was it more exaggerated than in North Carolina with its geographical differences, its lack of religious conformity, its varying social types, and its differences in economy. These were compounded by political factors which grew out of them and by personal ambitions, family jealousies, and local rivalries and competitions.

The first important division developed between the coastal Albemarle counties (settled initially largely by overflow from Virginia and bringing an orientation in this direction) and, to the south, the Lower Cape Fear section (populated principally by the overflow from the Charleston area). The basic conflict was in matters of representation in the legislature, but took other forms as well, such as lower

land rents to the north. The Albemarle country tended to monopolize the government, but as the Neuse-Pamlico area grew a more equal struggle ensued.

It was especially bitter in the 1740s and the early 1750s. It was so intense that North Carolina did not get even a fixed capital at New Bern until 1766. Disorder and confusion became the order of the day in Albemarle where the actions of a "Rump Assembly," controlled by the southern counties, were ignored for almost a decade.

Peace came in the north-south representation issued, in 1754, with a settlement by the Crown, aided by the need for common action to contain the threatened domination of the east by the western areas where population was rapidly increasing. There were important differences between east and west with the latter clamoring for more representation and less autocratic control by the eastern "popular party." Even the building of the capitol, "government house," or "Tryon's Palace," as it was called, completed in 1770, was a bone of contention.

The east was settled largely by English and Scottish Highlanders and had developed a plantation economy based on slave labor and aristocratic ideals whereas the west was largely of Scotch-Irish and German stock which had built an economy of small farms using free labor and stressing democratic ideals. There was religious difference, too, with an entrenched Anglican Church in the older area and different faiths in the newly settled sections. In the east there were commercial outlets to England, to the West Indies, and to New England, and in lesser degree with Virginia and Charleston. The back-country was more landlocked, being largely restricted to overland trade with Pennsylvania,

Virginia, and South Carolina whence the settlers had come.

The east dominated the legislature as well as all branches of the provincial government and the local government was of an undemocratic character. Few offices were filled by popular vote. Being of appointive nature they were well controlled through interlocking arrangements between the governor and the "courthouse rings." There were many colonial "carpetbaggers," officeholders who were outsiders. Multiple office holding was also rampant. Although this did not offend the eighteenth century concept of public office, it became more irritating to the restive westerners who were powerless to gain effective relief in, or control of, even their local affairs. Land agents with their exorbitant fees were another irritant that produced unrest, proclamation, and disorder. There was even a local riot in 1759 at Enfield in Halifax County.

The end result was the Regulator movement (1765-1771) which, in 1768, was formally organized as the Regulator Association. It was centered in Orange, Granville, Halifax, and Anson counties. The keynote of the Regulation agreement which was adopted was: "An officer is a servant of the publick, and we are determined to have the officers of this county under a better and honester regulation than any have been for some time." The assumed intent was to pay no taxes until they were satisfied that they were agreeable to law, and to pay no fees, except those required by law, and to settle differences by a simple majority rule. The Regulators sought action to solve problems by peaceful and legal means. They sought to assure the

Governor that they were neither disloyal nor disaffected, except in "the corrupt and arbitrary practices of nefarious and designing men who being put into posts of profit and credit among us, use every artifice, every fraud, and where these fails, threats and menaces are not spared to squeeze and extract from the wretched poor."

Being outside of the law and the provincial system, however, the Regulators were difficult to deal with and were ordered to disband, pay their taxes, and not molest the officers. Efforts were made to placate them and to deal with at least some of their grievances to small avail. When they took their case into the legislature, it failed there. Meanwhile their numbers grew and their activities spread, especially with the passage of the Johnson Riot Act aimed specifically at their operations. The matter came to a head when the Governor ordered a special court term at Hillsboro and directed enlisted militiamen (some 1500, of which 1000 were easterners) to protect the court. The Regulators answered with a force of their own of some 2000 men led by Rednap Howell. A pitched battle ensued at Great Alamance Creek on May 16, 1771.

After two hours of battle the Regulators were beaten and scattered and Governor Tryon was victorious. In the end 12 were tried for treason and convicted, with six being hanged and six pardoned. Tryon offered clemency to all Regulators who would lay down arms and submit to authority. Within six weeks over six thousand submitted and duly received pardons from the King through Governor Martin, who had now succeeded Tryon. Many Regulators left North Carolina, moving on to Tennessee country shortly after their crushing defeat.

Much has been said of the Regulators and the Alamance but Hugh Talmage Lefler, a prominent North Carolina historian, has concluded that "It was not a democratic movement in the modern sense . . . . It is claiming too much to maintain that Alamance was the first battle of the American Revolution. It was simply the climax of a revolt of the western people against oppressive laws and corrupt local officials. There was not a single British redcoat at Alamance Creek in 1771." It did leave scars and on this governor Martin hoped to capitalize, but here he misjudged the temper of the people for the Regulators did not supply loyalists in any great number.[1]

Martin counted heavily, too, on the Scottish Highlanders. Many had sought the haven of North Carolina, to join the number of their countrymen who had already preceded them when the continuing resistance to the Union with England was broken in the battle of Culloden on April 16, 1746. They had taken the offered oath to the House of Hanover and emigrated in peace. Settlements multiplied in the Upper Cape Fear Valley, where at the head of navigation the twin villages of Campbelltown and Cross Creek (present Fayetteville) had grown up as ports and centers of the "wagon trade." Cross Creek developed into the chief community of the "Highland area." Cross Hill (Carthage) was, also, in their area of concentration. Many became merchants and farmers, and others did equally as well in the production of naval stores (tar, pitch, and turpentine) which were needed and used by the British Navy in ship

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1. According to Lefler, "An examination of the record reveals that of 883 of the known Regulators, 289 were Whigs [Patriots], 34 Tories [Loyalists], and 560 Revolutionary status unknown."

construction and maintenance.

The Growth of Revolutionary Sentiment

Revolutionary sentiment had grown in North Carolina, as in the other Colonies, and its roots extended back to the inauguration of England's "New Colonial Policy" in 1763. The early enactments dealing with land, trade, taxation, and defense that grew out of this had less impact in North Carolina, perhaps, than in most other Colonies. The Stamp Act drew the first storm of protest and this was charged as a tyrannical violation of the traditional principle of English liberty that there should be no taxation without representation. Likewise there was opposition to the Townshend Acts of 1767. Two years later when Governor Tryon, anticipating troublesome reaction, dissolved the Assembly, its speaker called a meeting independent of the Governor. This resulted in a general nonimportation association and the organization of several such local associations. This was followed in due course by a committee of correspondence. The Tea Act of 1773, the Boston Tea party, and the Coercive Acts of 1774 were fuel for the flame. North Carolinians saw the "cause of Boston" as "the cause of all" and dispatched a sloop loaded with corn, flour, and pork to aid the people of Massachusetts.

When the call went out from the Colonies in 1774 for the first Continental Congress, Governor Josiah Martin, who had replaced Tryon in 1771, refused to call the legislature. In answer there were mass meetings and eventually North Carolina's first Provincial Congress was

called for late August. It met in New Bern. This assembly, meeting independent of the Governor, embraced 71 representatives from 30 counties and six of the Colony's boroughs. In a three-day session it fully launched North Carolina into the revolutionary movement by expressing sympathy for the people of Massachusetts, endorsing the idea of a general congress and naming delegates to it, adopting the nonimportation and nonexportation agreement, criticising the acts and policies of the British ministry,and denying Parliament's right to tax.

Fiery Governor Martin tried to stem the tide of revolution, but when he called an Assembly early in 1775, he found he could not control its actions, and meeting concurrently was the Second Provincial Congress with an almost identical membership. Martin denounced both bodies and was forced to dismiss the Assembly (the last of North Carolina's Royal Assemblies) while the Provincial Congress went on with its deliberations. Its business covered a statement of the right to hold meetings and to petition the King for redress of grievances. It approved the Continental Association, reelected delegates to Continental Congress, endorsed the idea of saftey committees and encouraged their formation on a local and province-wide basis. It further provided for its speaker, ailing John Harvey, to call another Provincial Congress when needed. In case of Harvey's death then his successor, likely to be Samuel Johnson, should do the same.

Martin now became deeply concerned, seeing that royal government was falling apart. His own situation he described as "most despicable and mortifying." Then came the action at Lexington and Concord on

April 19, prompting more forceful assertation by the committees of safety, which Martin branded as "motley mobs" and "promoters of sedition." It was on May 20 that the **Mecklenburg** County body made its famous declaration that it was "a free and independent people." A few days later, on the 31st, this same body resolved that commissions granted by the King were "null and void," and asked for election of military officers to hold power independent of Great Britain. Feeling was high in **Mecklenburg** and this was the earliest expression of this sort, a bold expression when loyalty to the Crown was still generally accepted.

Governor Martin Flees

Martin issued a proclamation against the work of the safety committees but to no avail. He became angrier by the hour. His March request to Gen. Thomas Gage, Commander of British troops in North America, for arms and ammunition came to naught. The ordnance before his "palace" disappeared and there were **rumors** that he would be seized. Fearful for their personal safety, he had already laid plans for the quiet departure of himself and his family (his children and his wife who was "big with child"). In the early hours of the 31st of May, he, after directing the spiking of the remaining cannon, and burying "powder, shot, ball and various military stores and implements . . . in the palace gardens and yard," fled to Fort Johnson on the Cape Fear where he arrived on June 2. Here he sent his family on to New York while he sojourned for a time and on June 25 called a council meeting. It was a small group, depleted by desertions, but it authorized him to issue commissions, recruit replacements and to petition Gage for funds

with which to repair the fort.

His stay at Fort Johnson was short. Hearing reports of a planned attack on the Fort itself, he fled to the British ship Cruizer, a sloop of war, lying just offshore. From shipboard, on July 18, he watched the Fort and its surroundings burn at the hands of what he termed a "savage and audacious mob." In proclamation, in letters, and in threats and promises, he sought unavailingly to regain the lost initiative. He did receive a constant flow of supporters and advisors whom he used effectively. He may have been discouraged but he was not dismayed and he was very, very persistent. The burning of Fort Johnston, performed by Colonels Robert Howe of Brunswick County, John Ashe of New Hanover, Cornelius Harnett of Wilmington, and their volunteers has been described as "the opening scene of actual war in North Carolina."

Martin--young, aggressive, and intelligent--knew that North Carolina was ill prepared for war and that public opinion in many quarters was sharply divided on this vital question. There were actually three groups, or parties, in the Colony. The Patriots (Whigs) as they were commonly known, constituted perhaps half the population and stood ready to fight for a "redress of grievances," for independence if need be. Predominately small farmers and artisans, there were also numerous large landholders among them.

The loyalists (Tories, King's Men, or Royalists as they were variously called) stood ready to oppose British policies with peaceful means but not with war. Many wealthy merchants, the old official class, some large planters and professional men and conservatives, who feared

both despotism and anarchy, were numbered here. Among the loyalists, too, were numerous Scottish Highlanders and some of the still disgruntled Regulators.

The third group was made up of neutrals, and these constituted a smaller group than either of the others. In this category came the Moravians, the Quakers, and a large number of Germans in the Piedmont counties. There was ground to be cultivated in this alignment and Governor Martin sought to do his best from his floating headquarters on the Cruizer, and later the H.M.S. Scorpion. Ashore, the tide of revolution continued to rise. The time of choosing sides had come and opposition to the Crown became as popular and as necessary as open hostility to Parliament.

Martin's departure left North Carolina without organized government. A provincial government was needed, yet Samuel Johnston, who as expected replaced John Harvey who died in May, seemed reluctant to use his authority to call another Provincial Congress although there were urgings from many quarters, especially from the usually active Wilmington Committee of Safety. Despite the railings of Governor Martin and despite the undercurrent that suggested stopping short of revolution and war, a call did go out for a meeting at Hillsboro on August 20.

It opened with an individual profession of loyalty to the Crown and denied Parliament's right to tax the colonies. Secretly, however, it took steps to procure arms and ammunition and named two committees to checkmate Martin's propaganda efforts, one to work with the Scottish Highlanders (especially those who had recently migrated to North Carolina)

and one to confer with the Regulators to win them to the patriot cause. Attention, also went to organizing a provincial government.

A chief concern of the Hillsboro Congress was preparation for war. Two regiments were authorized for the Continental Line, one, the First, to be commanded by Col. James Moore of New Hanover County, and the Second by Col. Robert Howe. In addition there were to be six battalions of "minute men," one from each of the military districts. Among the designated battalion commanders were the established revolutionaries Richard Caswell of New Bern and Alexander Lillington of New Hanover County, which embraced Wilmington.

A bounty of 25 shillings was fixed for each enlisted man for the purchase of a uniform consisting of a "hunting shirt, Leggins, or Splater dashes and Black Garters." A bayonet was to be part of a properly equipped "smooth bore of Musket . . . /or/ Rifle."

Recruitment and organization went ahead as all out war became a stark possibility. On December 9 there were North Carolina men at the battle of Great Bridge, south of Norfolk, Va., there at the request of Virginia to help contain Governor Dunmore's depredations in that area. Aid was given, too, to the South Carolina Whigs in defeating a group of Tories on December 22 in the "Snow Campaign" in that Colony.

The Grand Plan

Governor Martin, much the optimist and the schemer, also had his plans. As early as June 30, 1775, he offered a plan to the British Secretary of State for the Colonies, Lord Dartmouth, which he predicted could restore Royal control not only to North Carolina but also in the

entire South.

It called for external aid to support an internal uprising which, when at full strength, could yield 30,000 men. He would need arms and ammunition from General Gage for 3,000 Highlanders and to this end wrote to him asking for 10,000 stands of arms, six brass cannon and other supplies. He also asked, unsuccessfully, for a restoration of his army commission, which he had earlier sold because of ill health. He dispatched a messenger to London to transmit his plan which, when implemented, would require: (1) a loyalist army of 9,000 (3,000 each of Highlanders, Regulators, and Tories) which he had no doubt he could recruit; (2) Major General Charles, Lord Cornwallis and seven regiments of British soldiers from Great Britain; (3) 2,000 British soldiers from Boston with Sir Henry Clinton; and (4) Vice Admiral Sir Peter Parker with a powerful fleet of 54 ships. All were to concentrate at Brunswick by late February 1776. The British forces operating in coordination, and in cooperation with the loyalists would override the patriots and regain power and control.

Lord Dartmouth evidently saw merit in the plan which was ably presented by Martin's messenger, Alexander Schaw, a planter of the Cape Fear region who received £ 100 for his troubles and seemingly did a good selling job.

It became the major campaign plan of the British against the rebelling colonials. The plan fitted the ideas of those British government officials who saw North Carolina as the weakest link in the American Colonies, excepting Georgia. Even an Indian uprising in the west of Creeks and

Cherokees was envisioned as a possible element in the plan. The campaign was two-pronged with North Carolina as the first objective. The second possibility, since the sand bars blocking the Cape Fear might be difficult for the fleet, was the capture of Charleston. Dartmouth had particular misgivings about this, yet insisted on the North Carolina venture and consultation on the scene with Governor Martin. Afterwards could come careful decision as to the next objective.

Thus the British Ministry had chosen the southern colonies as the field for a major, if too leisurely, effort against the American "rebels." The expedition was to unite with the Tories of North Carolina, secure that province, and then choose its further objective in the South.

Even in July General Gage had sent Lt. Col. Donald McDonald and Capt. Donald McLeod from the British Army into North Carolina to recruit men for a battalion of the Royal Highland Emigrant Regiment. They entered through New Bern and as it was later reported: "They were suspected of some sinister designs and [were] questioned by the provincials concerning their business. They pretended they were officers who were wounded at Bunker Hill and left the army with a desire to settle among their friends." In truth they had seen service at Bunker Hill, and McDonald also at Culloden, but their intention was not retirement.

They remained on the scene, working closely with Martin, who commissioned McDonald a brigadier general in the militia and McLeod a lieutenant colonel in the same force. Armed with promises of free land, remission of arrears in quitrents, 20 years of tax exemption, and the untiring support of Martin, recruiting was good especially

among the more recent Highland arrivals (those coming since 1770), from whom the Governor had required an oath of loyalty before he would grant them land.

The Plan Becomes Operational

Plans developed in England and the required expedition was organized and outfitted. The result was that an impressive armada sailed from Cork in Ireland on February 13, 1776, much later than the initially projected early January. Commanded by Sir Peter Parker, it embraced a flagship of 50-guns, the Bristol, four 28-gun frigates and two smaller vessels of the same class, a sloop, a schooner, and a bomb ketch. These convoyed more than 30 transports with about 2,500 troops (six regiments and parts of another besides the usual mariners and seamen).

General Lord Cornwallis commanded the military--his first command on a scene that would eventually claim much of his time and end in his surrender of a major British Army at Yorktown near the Chesapeake in 1781. When a few days out, the fleet was hit by violent gales which scattered it and some vessels were forced back into port. The bulk of the expedition, however, continued to the Carolina coast.

Out of Boston went Sir Henry Clinton, on January 20, having been dispatched by Gen. Sir William Howe who had replaced General Gage as the British army commander on the American scene. He sailed in the 20-gun frigate Mercury, accompanied by a transport carrying two companies of light infantry and "a few Highlanders." This was an implementation of the general plan as communicated by the British

Ministry to Howe.

Clinton put in at New York to talk with William Tryon, now governor there. He spoke openly of the Carolina campaign. He sailed again in mid-February, clearing Sandy Hook on the 11th, but detoured in at Norfolk to confer with Dunmore before proceding, as directed, to his expected rendezvous with Parker off the Carolina coast. He cleared the Norfolk harbor on February 26, having been delayed by stormy and windy weather.

It was through Dunmore, keenly disappointed that Clinton's objective was not Virginia, that Clinton first learned that the loyalists in North Carolina were already on the march to the coast. He was unable to reach the scene and to anchor within the Cape Fear until March 12 and he found Martin waiting.

Governor Martin Surveys the Scene

Martin was apprised of these campaign developments as early as November, and on December 23 Lord George Germain, Dartmouth's successor, notified Martin that troops were ready for embarkation and that they would be convoyed by the Royal Navy.

Dartmouth's dispatches detailing the expedition reached Governor Martin on January 3. Then he surveyed the local situation, realizing that the key to his mobilization was the embodiment of the Scotch Highlanders of Cumberland County. The more recent arrivals were his most solid adherents as numerous of the old and settled Highlanders had, or practiced, neutralist sentiments. There were some loyal

adherents urging him on such as Allen McDonald, a person of influence among his people and husband of the renowned Flora. There were, too, the British recruiting officers, Donald McDonald and Captain Donald McLeod. Many residents of the Brunswick area, when visiting the Cruizer, complained bitterly of the treatment now being meted out to them by former friends and natives. On November 12 Martin wrote that he believed "the Scotch Highlanders here are generally and almost without exception staunch to Government, and . . . I am persuaded to believe that loyal subjects yet abound and infinitely outnumber the seditious throughout all the very populous Western Counties of this Province."

As early as mid-November Martin had sent a trusted Highland messenger, Alexander McLean, who was summoned for the purpose, to the interior (his first courier, a Brunswick man, had turned traitor) to contact the local leaders and to determine "with certainty" the number of men who could be brought to the royal standard and who would march to the coast by February 15. He was determined now if possible to call out the loyal of the Highlanders and the Regulators and to unite these with the coastal loyalists and stand off the patriots till the fleet arrived.

After visiting in different counties, McLean called the leaders together in council at Cross Creek, swore them to secrecy and disclosed the Governor's plan. Estimates were cautious: an enlistment of 3,000, but only 1,500 stands of arms. McLean, however, was more optimistic and told Martin that his personal estimate was 6,000 men well equipped with horses and wagons. It had been decided that part of the force,

1,000 men, would remain at Cross Creek to protect the families and property of those on the expedition. The main body of the troops could possess Wilmington by February 20, no later than the 25th.

With this report and Dartmouth's dispatches detailing the expedition, Martin decided to act and forthwith issued "under his hand on 10 January 1776" the necessary proclamation for the loyalists to rise:

> I, reposing especial trust and confidence in your loyalty, courage, prudence and fidelity, do by virtue of the powers and authorities in me vested by His Majesty, hereby commissionate, authorize and empower you . . . to erect the King's standard, and to raise, levy, muster, and array in arms, all His Majesty's loyal and faithful subjects within your respective Counties, or in any part or parts of this Province, who are willing and ready to repair to the Royal banner, for the support of the laws and Constitution thereof, against the most harried and unnatural rebellion that has been excited therein by traitorous, and designing men, and now threatens the subversion of His Majesty's Government, and the utter destruction of the rights and liberties of His Majesty's people.

This was directed to 26 persons, by name, in the counties of Anson, Cumberland, Guilford, Orange, Mecklenburg, Rowan, Surry and Bute. The list was headed by Allan McDonald, Donald McDonald, and Alexander and Donald McLeod. The proclamation granted authority to form companies of 50 men, each with a commissioned captain, lieutenant and ensign and power to requisition arms, provisions, and transportation as required.

They were to resist "Rebels and traitors" and "with all possible secrecy, to concert /to/ a place of general rendezvous for your forces there to march in a body, by such route as you shall judge proper, to

Brunswick, so ordering your movements that you may reach that town on the 15th of February next." It urged that rebels, expecially leaders, be made prisoners and that special care be exercised for women and children with no use of cruelty and there was to be "no violence . . . against the laws of humanity."

The die was cast even though, as events proved, the timing was poor, for the forces from the north and the expedition from England were way behind schedule. In the Colony, however, the time was ripe.

The Loyalists Mobilize

McLean conveyed the proclamation to the Highland leaders at Cross Creek and sent a circular letter to the other loyalist leaders calling for a meeting at Cross Creek on February 5. This came off as planned although there were but four leaders from sections of the province other than the well represented Highland area. There was Highland sentiment for delay until March 1, unless the British expeditionary force arrived in the meanwhile, but this was put aside by pressure from the Regulator and other loyalists leaders. There was some confusion as to how many men could be raised, but optimism prevailed. It was agreed that Captain McLeod, as a regular British officer, should return with the loyalist leaders and conduct this group to Cross Creek, this "being the place of general rendezvous."

Donald McDonald, as Martin's brigadier-general of the militia, was given command of the loyalist force. McLeod became second in command with his rank of lieutenant-colonel. McDonald would add to the expedition his 300 recruits for the Royal Highland Emigrant Regiment.

McDonald then, on the same day, February 5, as commander and "Bragadier General . . . of His Majestys Forces, for the time being, in North Carolina," by manifesto, directed that all of "His Majesty's loyal subjects in this Province . . . repair to the Royal banner, agreeable to the Governor's Royal Proclamation of date of 10th day of January last."

But all did not go well, expecially in the back country, despite McDonald's promises. Loyalists found it difficult to organize and in various localities only small groups came through. In Surry County the loyalists were quickly dispersed. In Guilford, local opposition interfered and when a patriot company commander, Capt. William Dent, was killed in a skirmish, he became the first fatality of the campaign. Many would-be loyalists in Regulator country, lacking leadership, became inactive and avoided joining in the movement.

Donald McLeod led 500 men toward Cross Creek, a group with which he was not impressed nor they with him. When word spread that a large body of patriots was at hand the group evaporated. McLeod had to return to a designated rendezvous at Cross Hill, where there was a bustle of activity. The thrifty Scots were taking advantage of the British inducements for enlistment. These included 200 acres of land, the same pay as regular troops, compensation for any equipment used and no duty outside North Carolina. The bonus was cancellation of quitrent arrears and an exemption of future quitrents for 20 years. Most older Scots hesitated to commit themselves whereas the new

arrivals had few ties in their new home. There was, too, some attachment for the crown, some fear of reprisal and, for a few, the possible loss of a retired officers' half pay status. It is said that the force assembling here was made up of late arrivals and the poor. There were some 500 Highlanders at Cross Hill and Col. Thomas Rutherford of the Cumberland militia, one of the more prominent native organizers, promised to join McDonald at Cross Creek with another 500, undoubtedly with pipes, kilts, bonnets, and claymores as available.

McDonald felt that the best move was to unite these two forces and moved to Cross Creek on February 12. Here, although units drifted in and out, he was disappointed. So also was Colonel Rutherford who felt it necessary to issue his own manifesto under date of the 13th, calling a muster of "His Majesty's faithfull subjects" there for the people of the county on, or before, February 16. He deplored the fact that his initial call for the 12th was so largely ignored because of inaction, fear, apprehension, or intimidation. He assured them that unless they turned out they would be aiding the rebellion and would incur the "just resentment of an angered and gracious Sovereign."

McDonald saw few signs of the Regulators, or back-country loyalists. The Guilford contingent had been turned back. Others expecting to find Governor Martin and a thousand British regulars were disappointed and returned home. Plans to send Donald McLeod and Alexander McLean into the back-country were dropped due to fast growing tenseness and feeling in the province, but other messengers did bring in a few till there were 130 from Regulator county who "join'd the Camp at Cross Creek

the 14th."

The Patriots Mobilize

Patriot leaders were generally aware of Martin's plans, and the activity in the Highland settlement area alarmed them. This could be his "kindling the flames of a Civil war" as in truth it was. These might be the suspected signs for the general uprising. Pleas to neighboring colonies brought 500 pounds of powder from Virginia, and South Carolina offered 1,000. Calls for a step-up in mobilization went out and, even in the western part of the province, it gained momentum. In the low country, however, it was well advanced and was being carried out with more precision.

Two regiments for the Continental Line, the First under Col. James Moore and the Second under Robert Howe, were already being organized. Of the two leaders it was said that Moore was the most feared by the loyalists as one who compelled them "at once to dread and esteem" him. The organization of local minutemen and militia was also accelerated. Ragged and motley in appearance, they could be rough in combat. One contemporary remarked: "They indeed made a most unmartial appearance, But the worst figure there can shoot from behind a bush and kill even a general Wolfe."

Word of McDonald's proclamation was sufficient to spur the patriots to action in east and west. The District Committee of Safety in Salisbury sent immediate word to its local units in middle North Carolina and soon Col. James Thackston was grouping patriots from Surry, Guilford, Orange, Chatham, and related areas beyond Cross Creek.

The Patriots Take to the Field

It was likewise the feared minutemen and militia who answered the call to arms on February 10 as the alert went to the lower Cape Fear telling of the trouble then fomenting at Cross Creek. Col. Alexander Lillington, a man of wealth, intelligence, family position, and militia commander for the Wilmington District, was the commanding officer of this particular group. At Wilmington breastworks were thrown up, martial law was declared, and all refusing an oath to support the patriot cause were put to work on the fortifications. Guns were placed on the parapets, firerafts were assembled, stores were removed to safety and women and children were sent to points outside the town.

This answered the report that the Cruizer was moving up to attack the town, as in truth it did, a little later, but withdrew when the town seemed too secure against attack and shallow water prevented movement upstream. No help or encouragement for the loyalists was possible from this quarter and the sloop dropped back toward Brunswick.

The Committee of Safety for the New Bern District, on February 10, acted to counter the rising of the loyalists which indications showed had begun "Hostilities against the cause of United Colonies." On the 5th, "they began their March in Order to join at Cross Creek on the fifteenth then to march from there to Wilmington and Brunswick." The committee resolved that "Col. Richard Caswell do march immediately with the Minute Men under his Command to join the Forces which may march from different Posts of this Province in Order to suppress said Insurrection." The colonels in Dobbs, Johnson, Pitt, and Craven counties

were urged to raise as many militia "as may be thought necessary" to join Caswell's command.

Militia to the total of 200 in Craven County would mobilize for duty at New Bern in the absence of the "Minute Men." The Committee authorized its president to deliver 10 kegs of powder and 350 weight of "Lead and Bullets" to Caswell, or to his lieutenant, Colonel Bryan. Dobbs and Pitt Counties were requested to furnish as much powder and lead as possible. Caswell and his officers were authorized "to hire convenient Carts, Waggons, Horses &c., as shall be necessary for this Service, or otherwise to press them, and also to purchase Camp Kettles for the Use of the Men." An additional order went to Lt. Henry Vipon, and "such of the Men as are accoutred under his Command belonging to the Second Regiment of troops in the Service of the United Colonies now at New Bern," to march with "as many Artillery as can be got ready to join Col. Caswell."

In a letter from New Bern, dated February 13, it was noted that "our Minute-Men" and part of the militia would march on the 14th and join Caswell in Dobbs County where, in two or three days, he would have 1,000 men under his command. The author, in commenting on the Tories, wrote: "I am of opinion they will get well flogged before they reach Cape Fear, provided they will fight." The word was that Col. John Ashe in New Hanover County had the "Regulators" on the defensive with his own force of 2,000. He, a native of Brunswick County, and "a zealous advocate for Independence" had been a runner-up for Moore's First Regiment command in August of 1775, having resigned a colonelcy in the

Royal Government to be elected to the same rank by the people of New Hanover.

Colonel James Moore, the senior officer, was actually the first to take to the field against the organizing loyalists at Cross Creek and was the commanding officer. With several days of unremitting effort behind him, he was ready with his regulars, equipped and supplied and with artillery.

As he reported: "On the earliest intelligence that the Tories were collecting and embodying at Cross Creek, which I received on the 9th of February, I proceeded to take possession of Rockfish-bridge, within seven miles of Cross Creek, which I considered an important post. This I effected on the 15th, with my own regiment, five pieces of artillery, and a part of the Bladen militia." Believing his force to be smaller than that of the loyalists, he halted here and set out "to entrench and fortify that pass and wait for a reinforcement." Such reached him on the 19th in the form of: (1) 150 Wilmington minutemen under Colonel Lillington, (2) 200 Duplin militia led by Col. James Kenon, and (3) 100 Volunteer Independent Rangers (Yagers) commanded by Colonel Ashe. This gave Moore about 1,100 men while his intelligence reported McDonald's strength accurately at 1,400, or 1,500. Colonels Lillington and Ashe had left Col. William Purviance in command of militia for the defense of Wilmington. Moore knew, too, that Col. Richard Caswell was moving toward him from the east and that Cols. James Thackston and James Martin were approaching Cross Creek and McDonald from the west with troops from the "up-country."

The Campaign Opens for the Loyalists

On February 15 General Donald McDonald, in the midst of organizing his force, asked for a "return of strength" and found that he had 1,400 men present but only 500 of them with firearms. Thereupon "an order was issued to embody a Number of light Horse to secure the county & bring in all the Arms they could find belonging to the Rebels." In the next three days, while the camp remained all the while at Cross Creek, "130 stand of Arms were brought in." Also some 1,000 to 1,200 weight of powder was taken from the "Committee of Cumberland." This powder "the Merchants of Crosscreek had lodged in their hands to prevent its falling into the hands of disaffected people." He supplemented this with supplies bought from local merchants while items such as British colors were fabricated from "camp equipage." His force was made up of some 130 Regulators with the remainder divided about equally between Highlanders and other loyalists.

On February 18, with time running out for the rendezvous on the coast and the patriots assembling around him, McDonald gave the order to march from Cross Creek. The army then moved four miles to its next encampment. He had two routes open to him. One was along the south side of the Cape Fear's Northwest Branch to Brunswick. This was the first choice, but Moore stood athwart it in a fortified position behind Rockfish Creek. The second involved crossing the Northwest Branch and proceeding on the north side for Wilmington.

On the 19th "all the Men with Arms was [were] ordered to parade having in view to attack Moors Provisional Army in their entrenchments

that Night at Rockfish, within four miles of our Camp." There was, however, a change of plans. Word was brought in that Richard Caswell with 600 men was marching to join Moore at Rockfish. McDonald, confronted by a formidable entrenched opponent with artillery, decided that instead of attacking Moore he would intercept Caswell. Already the rumor of the expected attack on Moore had cost McDonald the defection of two companies of Col. James Cotton's Corps from Anson County who "ran off with their arms very early that night."

An Exchange of Messages

Very likely as a delaying movement, and hardly from any expectation of success for the maneuver, on the 19th McDonald sent a messenger under truce to Moore. Perhaps his objective was intelligence, for his reports indicated that Moore had a force of 2,000 men.

In any case he sent Moore a copy each of Governor Martin's January 10 proclamation and of his own manifesto in the event that Moore had not seen them. He pointed out that should Moore accept these as undoubtedly he should, it would end the violence that was impending and he could depend on the "proferred clemency" of the King. Should he not accept this opportunity, then, by noon of the following day: "I must consider you as enemies, and take the necessary steps for the support of legal authority." In short, the message which Daniel Morrison brought from McDonald to Moore was in a sense a choice between war or peace.

Moore very probably was surprised at this move, yet he used it to gain a little time, 24 hours of it. His swift reply, penned at the

"Camp at Rock fish," was short as a formal reply, but it left no doubt as to how he felt. He professed no acquaintance, until then, with the Governor's proclamation, yet he found "the terms therein proposed are such as I hold incompatible with the freedom of Americans, it can be no rule of conduct for me." He stated, however, that he would consult his officers by noon the next day and have a final reply at that time.

At noon on the 20th the reply was ready and was taken to McDonald by Capt. James Walker of Moore's Command. It was pointed. "We consider ourselves engaged in a cause the most glorious and honourable in the world, the defense of the liberties of mankind, in support of which we are determined to hazard everything dear and valuable and in tenderness to the deluded people under your command, permit me, Sir through you to inform them, before it is too late, of the dangerous and destructive precipice on which they attend . . . . I have thought proper to send you a test recommended by the Continental Congress, which if they will yet subscribe we are willing to receive them as friends and countrymen." A rejection of this offer would brand them "as enemies to the constitutional liberties of America" subject to appropriate action. Moore reminded McDonald of the oath that he and his officers had taken at New Bern "On your arrival to this country."[1]

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1. When McDonald and Donald McLeod entered the province in the summer of 1775 the Committee of Safety at New Bern had been warned to suspect them. Their story of being officers wounded at Bunker Hill and no longer in the army was accepted, however, as well as their announced intention of seeking friends and relations with the thought of settling among them. After a quizzing they had been released to go about their business on taking an oath of loyalty to the Colony and a promise of orderly conduct.

This exchange of communications ended with the only reply that McDonald could make: ". . . it is my duty to conquer, if I cannot reclaim, all those who may be hardy enough to take up arms against the best of masters, as of Kings."

March and Counter March

On the 19th, even during the exchange of messages, McDonald sought to implement his decision to move toward Caswell rather than to attack Moore. He ordered his force to be ready the next day, the 20th, to move to Campbell Town and there to cross the Cape Fear River (Northwest Branch). To reassure and inspire his troops there was a "Speech . . . encouraging them and to consider the glorious cause they engaged in and in serving their King and being instruments of relieving this Country from the tirannical oppression it groans under." There was a call to courage and steadfastness and an offer for the faint hearted to leave. Most, with enthusiasm, joined in the "general huza for the King" but another 20 men from Cotton's Corps "laid down their arms and declared their courage was not War proof."

Thereupon the army moved out to Campbell Town some four miles away and was occupied for the remainder of the day and that night in crossing the Cape Fear. Once across, all boats were burned and sunk to delay possible patriot pursuit that way. The next day, the 21st, Alexander McLeod with a detachment of 100 Highlanders, who had crossed over first, went immediately ahead to scout the route, especially to secure bridge crossings. He proceeded to the South River, 15 miles away, stopping to secure a crossing there. The army sluggishly followed and encamped

on the north side of the bridge since, before the wagons could pass, four hours of work on the bridge would be necessary. Once across, the next barrier was the Black River with the better crossing located at Cobetts Ferry.

Perhaps the word of a contemporary is of interest at this point. It is the account of a participant, one Hugh McDonald, a lad of 14, who was accompanying the loyalists:

> We marched from there [Cross Creek] down the northwest side of Cape Fear river for Wilmington, but, on learning that the Americans were embodying before them they crossed the river near the mouth of Rockfish, and steered their course through Duplin County, in places cutting their way as they went, until they got into the main stage road from Wilmington to Halifax, and then, followed that road until we got near to Moore's Creek, within eighteen miles of Wilmington."

Moore's intelligence (drawn from residents in the Cross Creek area) failed and for a time he lost contact with McDonald's force. His plan was to attack when more word was in hand from Colonels Martin and Thackston, "who, I had certain intelligence, were on their march." They needed to "get near enough to cut off their [the loyalists] retreat."

It was somewhat of a surprise to learn on the 21st that McDonald had crossed the river at Campbell Town and with his "whole army, sunk and destroyed all their boats, and taken their route the most direct way to Negro-head Point [the point opposite Wilmington between the branches of the Cape Fear]." This was McDonald's implementation (after council when his young officers who pled for battle were overruled) of a plan suggested by Farquand Campbell, a paroled patriot now taking a loyalist alignment, who had first brought the news of Caswell's field

force. Actually McDonald had several obligations and the delivery of his Royal Highland Emigrant Regiment to the coast for British use had some priority over the leadership of the loyalist militia which was a later assignment. Even with the militia his real purpose was the delivery of an army for rendezvous with British forces on the coast. Battle, if it could be avoided, was not necessary to this objective.

Moore now acted with decision, and with good strategy, making definite moves to intercept, or head off, the loyalist force in their march to the sea. His objective clearly was to block and break up the loyalist force and thus to prevent its arrival on the coast.

Word was dispatched to Caswell to return and take possession of Corbett's Ferry, the important Black River crossing, and to use "every means in his power to obstruct, harass, and distress them in their march." Colonels Martin and Thackston were directed to take and occupy Cross Creek "to prevent their return that way." Colonels Lillington and Ashe were sent by forced march to join, if possible, Col. Caswell at Corbett's Ferry. Should this fail they should "take possession of Moores Creek Bridge" and wait there. Moore with his own force set out for Elizabethtown to cross the river there and either to intercept McDonald en route to Corbett's Ferry, or "fall in their rear, and surround them there." In this manner Moore began to draw his net about McDonald.

The Armies Draw Close Together

On receiving his orders from Moore, Caswell proceeded to Corbett's Ferry. He arrived there on the 20th and deployed his troops, setting

up his two light artillery pieces, affectionately known as "Old Mother Covington and her daughter," to the best advantage to cover the approaches. Messengers to the countryside spread the word to local inhabitants to destroy all bridges in the path of the loyalists to slow their movement. To block the Cape Fear River against troop transport and supply, narrow points along it were secured. At Mount Misery, some four miles above Wilmington, a boom was thrown across the stream by the town's defenders under Col. Purviance, who stationed 120 men there.

McDonald continued his way eastward, cautiously and slowly, half expecting an ambush, or surprise, from Caswell. On the 22nd he covered 10 miles and "took two of the Rebels." One he described as a "spy from Moore's Camp" while the second informed him that Caswell had altered his direction and was heading toward Wilmington.

On the 23rd the loyalists covered another 10 miles with Capt. Donald McLeod and Lt. Francis Fraser moving with "the Horse" some two miles to the front. About noon they sent word back that Caswell was "within 4 miles of us." Various unit commanders now were given the word "to array their men in Battle order." All "broadswords," the traditionally favored hand weapon of the Scots, were assembled and issued to "80 able bodied highlanders" who answered the call for volunteers. They, as shock troops, were placed under Capt. John Campbell "with orders to March in the Centre of the Army" and now "all necessary orders for an attack being adjusted the Army Marched in full spirits /with/ the Horse in front." At this juncture Fraser

spotted five mounted patriots and, in pursuit, took two of them. One fired on him "but luckily missed." It was learned from one of the prisoners that Caswell had crossed the Black River two days before and with 1,000 men was now dug in and entrenched on the opposite side of the river. Moreover, he had sunk "all the flats and boats on his side." Thereupon McDonald ordered his army to stop and camp four miles from the river.

The next day McLeod with a party of "Light Horse" proceeded to the River and came upon "a Negro" who knew the whereabouts of a "flat" (a barge-like boat) sunk in the river some five miles above Caswell at Corbett's Ferry. This informant agreed to raise the boat and to hold it in readiness. McLeod then sent in a report while he guarded his find and began the construction of a bridge.

On Sunday, the 25th, the army was put in motion, marched six miles to the river and began to cross on the now completed bridge. McLeod and his small party of "Light Horse" then began to scout ahead while the slow crossing continued. Some three miles away, near a sawmill, he came upon a supply train headed for Caswell's camp. The 21 "Bullocks" and the two "Wagon loads of Meal" were welcome to McDonald's troops. The 20 men and two officers taken were of less importance except for what intelligence they might provide.

When McDonald headed for the new temporary bridge and the river crossing, he dispatched "a few Men and a Drum and a Pipe to amuse Caswell." The intent was to take post across the river and

give the impression that the loyalists planned to cross the river and force his entrenchments. They fired intermittently throughout the day and kept Caswell's troops close to their positions. Thus their decoy assignment was successful. Having word that a party of 200 reinforcements for Caswell would pass several miles in front of his Army, McDonald detached William Campbell and posted him conveniently for interception, but nothing came of this.

On Monday morning, February 26, the Army and its "Baggage" completed the crossing of Black River, moving 10 miles that day. The detached parties rejoined the Army about eight in the morning and there was general optimism over the unopposed crossing. A consultation followed and it was "unanimously agreed that Caswell should be attacked immediately," especially since, some felt, "the Army being in Motion for that Purpose."

The Army started to move but new intelligence revealed that Caswell, having been outfoxed by McDonald in his crossing of the Black River, had himself hastily shifted his position to better advantage to intercept the loyalists. Actually he had marched the evening before to take "possession of the Bridge upon Widow Moore's Creek." The party that went to his abandoned camp at Corbett's Ferry "found there some /footsore/ horses and Provisions which the Precipitancy of their March made them leave behind."

As matters stood, McDonald had evaded Moore at Rockfish Creek and had carefully slipped around Caswell at Corbett's Ferry. On the 23rd Moore had crossed the Cape Fear River (Northwest Branch) but then

was forced to wait a day for a supply of provisions, having learned that Caswell "was almost entirely without." When about ready to march, Caswell's dispatch arrived telling of McDonald's crossing of the Black. Thereupon Moore reports:

> I was then determined, as the last expedient, to proceed immediately [with the troops] in boats down the Northwest River to Dollison's Landing, about sixty miles from them; and to take possession of Moore's Creek Bridge [about 10 miles from Dollison's Landing] . . . at the same time acquainting Colonel Caswell of my intentions, and recommending him to retreat to Moore's Creek Bridge, if possible; but if not, to follow on in their rear.

Moore reached Dollison's Landing about 4:00 p.m. on the 26th but it was necessary to camp there overnight since there were no horses for the artillery. He did, however, dispatch "an express to Moores Creek Bridge" and learned that Colonel Caswell and his 800 men had taken position there that day. Caswell himself had been preceded by Colonel Lillington, who arrived at the Bridge on the 25th with Col. John Ashe and some 150 militia.

On the Eve of Battle

Moores Creek Bridge was to be the point of contest. It was a link in the road which McDonald was following to Wilmington and to the sea. There had been a bridge here as early as 1743, even then being known as "The Widow Moore's Creek Bridge."

Moores Creek itself is a sluggish stream which empties into the Black River some ten miles above the point where the Black in turn empties into the Cape Fear. At the bridge site the creek is

some 50 feet wide and normally some five feet deep but subject to an additional several feet of fluctuation with the tide. Here its dark waters wind in wide loops through marshy terrain, its bottom miry with the heavy accumulation of mud and debris. The timber bridge connected the slight bank on the west side with a narrow sand bar on the east. It constituted an excellent defensive position for the patriots and Colonel Lillington was quick to see this when he moved in with his Wilmington militia on the 25th. Initially he threw up positions near the bridge but later left these for a more strategic location slightly to the rear.

Lillington's defensive position was a low trench, or earthwork, from which his men could get cover should attack come. It lay across the road from the bridge and enclosed a small area that overlooked the sand bar and the bridge and enjoyed a somewhat elevated position above both of these.

On the 26th Caswell, with 800 men, joined him and took command.[1] Perhaps initially with the thought of deception, Caswell sent his men across to the west side of the bridge to throw up embankments there. As the night of the 26th closed in, camp fires lighted the sky here on the west side of the Creek.

McDonald had lost the race to the bridge, a fact of which his scouts informed him when he was still six miles away. His quickened pace had not been enough. That evening he repeated the maneuver that

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1. The North Carolina Department of Archives and History is compiling a list, as full as possible, of the soldiers who marched with Caswell.

he had used on Moore at Cross Creek. He dispatched a messenger under a flag of truce into Caswell's camp, one James Hepburn, his secretary, who formerly was a member of the Provincial Congress. Hepburn took a copy of Governor Martin's proclamation and McDonald's manifesto, as well as a letter from McDonald to Caswell urging Caswell to submit to British authority, lay down arms, take the oath of allegiance to the Crown, and receive the King's pardon.

Caswell refused even to consider the content of the message, but Hepburn was successful in his reconnaissance. He was alert and observant while in the patriot camp, reporting that Caswell "had taken up his Ground 6 miles from us upon our side of the Bridge upon Widow Moore's Creek and that it was very Practicable to attack" him.

In line with his customary practice McDonald immediately called a council of his officers and in the end "it was unanimously agreed that the Enemy's Camp should directly be attacked." Initially, however, there were differing opinions. McDonald himself, with the older heads, seemingly did not favor attack, believing that Caswell outnumbered him and knowing that half his own force was without firearms. Besides, he was without artillery and his loyalists would be attacking an entrenched position. It was possible too, by detour, to use another crossing and to attempt a maneuver such as had been used in crossing the Black River several days earlier.

Battle, he must have thought again, if avoidable, was not necessary to his objective. But the younger, eager officers carried the day by persistence, even a hint at cowardice. Actually McDonald

himself, no longer a young man, lay ill. The forced marches and the tension of the campaign had exhausted him. He was, he knew, unable to participate in the battle, and Donald McLeod was named to lead the assault. Almost prophetically at this very time Martin and the Wilmington Committee were haggling acrimoniously over flour supplies which the Governor had demanded for use on the Cruizer. In a written exchange "the Inhabitants of Wilmington, by their representatives in Committee," answered a threat of reprisal on their city: "These faithless and selfish people /McDonald's loyalists/ are now surrounded by three armies above three times their number, and the Town of Cross Creek, now in our hands will make some, tho, a very inadequate compensation for the destruction of Wilmington."

The Battle

It was about one o'clock on Tuesday morning, February 27, that the loyalist force was "order'd under arms." As soon as this was effected and arms and ammunition were checked and found ready, "800 men" began the long, dark, six-mile march to Moore's Creek Bridge. Actually, because of a shortage of arms, only 500 men out of a total army strength of about 1,600 were equipped for combat. The going was slow since "in the front of our Encampment was a very bad Swamp." It took time and energy to negotiate the thickets and the marshy, miry ground, especially for the wagons. The result was that it was less than an hour before daylight when they reached the patriot camp. Hugh McDonald has left a little glimpse of this march:

> In our Tory party was a Captain, John Campbell, (Scalpie,) who commanded the Broad-swordsmen, consisting principally of McRae's strong, resolute men, ignorant, untutored and untrained to the use of arms, but every one of that company had his broad-sword drawn and marched in front, a little before day, to the bridge.

On reaching Caswell's position of the evening before, there was disappointment when they looked closely at the fires which were "beginning to turn weak." Caswell had, in the night, moved his men to the other side of the Creek to join those of Lillington and Ashe and his deception was working well. It was not yet known that once across the bridge, he had directed his men to remove the planks from the structure, leaving only the bare sleepers in place across the stream. To make any crossing even more hazardous, some say that these heavy log sleepers (by report, round pine logs with the bark peeled off), were then "greased" with "soft soap and tallow."

The loyalists, to gain an element of surprise, entered Caswell's Camp in "three Columns" and there deduced after some speculation, that his troops had not "Marched" as at first suspected, but had "left their ground" for a better vantage point. At this juncture "orders were directly given to reduce the columns and form the Line of Battle within the verge of the Wood (it not being yet day)." This maneuver required that the army retire a little to the rear "to have the Wood to cover us from the sight of the Enemy."

It was agreed that the word for attack would be "King George and Broad Swords." The air was suddenly broken by a shot "on the plain" between the bridge and the point where McLeod's Army had

halted and become quiet. Soon there was "a firing . . . at the end of the Bridge." This sufficed to initiate the action and the impetuous McLeod could wait no longer. The 1,100 patriots, except for a few pickets, waited quietly, but tensely, behind their slight earthworks across the Creek. The "small entrenchment next the bridge" which Lillington had built initially stood empty in favor of the newer position on the rising ground. This empty work also was to encourage the loyalists to move ahead.

McLeod asked for the "Signals for Attack" and these followed, consisting of three cheers and then the beat of the drum and the shrill notes of the bagpipes. The men moved into action, claymores out and muskets primed, with Campbell's broadswordsmen in the center of the formation. Alexander McLean, with a patrol party of some 40 men, negotiated the distance between the "Army" and the bridge, "above a Cannon shot in our front," rather quickly and actually "came Accidently to the Bridge," or rather what was left of it.

It was still dark and Caswell's pickets saw him before they themselves were spotted. They issued a challenge and McLean answered that he was a friend. When asked to whom he replied "to the King." Thereupon "they squatted down upon their faces to the ground," thus concealing themselves. He failed to fully identify them before they crouched, and believing that they might be some of his own men who had crossed the bridge before him, offered a challenge "in Gallic," but received no reply. Thereupon he fired across the creek and ordered his men to do likewise and the battle was joined.

McLeod and Campbell's broadswordsmen hastened to the bridge to determine the cause of the firing. It was then that they saw the demolition which Caswell had performed. It would be difficult to negotiate the dismantled bridge, but by thrusting the points of their swords in the girders they could, and did, get some balance.

Thereupon Capt. McLeod, leading his men on one girder, and Capt. John Campbell on another rushed the bridge to learn the awful truth of the slippery girders. They drove "in a most furious manner" across the bridge, passed Lillington's earlier abandoned works, a hopeful sign, and toward the patriots waiting ahead. They came, as Moore reported to "within thirty paces of our breastwork and artillery." Then suddenly there was a "proper reception" as the patriots opened fire, a fire that quickly became intense. The patriots used to good advantage the fine position which they had selected. At this point, too, their two artillery pieces, trusty and faithful "Old Mother Covington and Her Daughter," added their persuasive voices to the melee.[1]

The air was full of a "whining storm of swan-shot and bullets" and the concentrated fire "did great execution." The first volley swept the bridge clean. Urging their men forward McLeod and Campbell came within a few paces of the breastwork where they fell, "the

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1. An oldtimer in 1853 had this reflection on the battle: I always understood, that after several ineffectual attempts had been made to fire the cannon, by applying the match; and after McLeod and his men had nearly crossed over the bridge, that Colonel Caswell rode up himself and fired his pistol into the touch-hole, when she went off."

former with upwards of twenty balls through his body," by one account, and "nine bullets and twenty-four swan shot," by another.[1] Before collapsing McLeod repeatedly raised himself, motioned others to continue the advance and cheered the men on.

Both McLeod and Campbell, as well as others of the few who crossed the Creek, paid with their lives in their gallant but futile charge. Many who followed slipped and fell into the dark waters of the Creek, where some were drowned. The impact of the patriot fire was swift and effective. The advance was stopped and the men, their leaders dead, hesitated, then broke and ran.

For a time the Highlanders across the creek took cover and ineffectively returned the patriot fire, but this was for only a few brief moments, until panic set in, and there was a rush to the supply wagons and to the camp of the previous night. The detachment that Caswell ordered across the creek, some of whom seemingly forded, or swam it, hastened the route.

It was all over in a long three minutes and victory for the patriots was total. Only two of the patriots were casualties and one of these would recover, while the other, John Grady[2] of Duplin County would die of his wounds within a few days, on March 2. He,

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1. Dead on the field, McLeod would not return to his bride, a daughter of Allan and Flora MacDonald, whom he is said to have left at the altar to heed Donald McDonald's call for the loyalist uprising.

2. He is reported as a private under Capt. James Lane in Caswell's command and was the first North Carolina man killed in regular combat during the Revolution.

it is said, was hit in the head by a ball, when he "raised himself above the breast-works" to get a better aim.

For the loyalists the loss, by the best estimates, was some 50 killed, wounded, or missing, "most of them shot on passing the bridge." Of this total at least 30 were killed.

The Rout and the Spoils

A loyalist witness wrote of the battle: "during the time of the fireing the most of the Country born army began to run away and could not be made to stand their Ground." This was the case of Col. James Cotton and of Thomas Rutherford who "ran like a lusty fellow." The troops lost their dignity and took cover in any way that offered itself. One contemporary related that: "the insurgents retreated with the greatest precipitation, leaving behind them some of their wagons &c. They cut their horses out of the wagons, and mounted three upon a horse. Many of them fell into the creek and were drowned." They fled in "irretrievable despair." Within minutes the patriots were over the parapet and in hot pursuit, yet it would take a little time to complete the roundup and assess the spoils. Obviously though the victory was complete. The victors, however, did not immediately press their advantages as they stopped to pillage the wagons and to collect the wounded.

Richard Caswell, who directed the defense of the bridge, reported that "Colonel Moore arrived at our camp a few hours after the engagement was over. His troops came up that evening, and are now [the 29th]

encamped on the ground where the battle was fought." Moore, the senior officer, now took command and organized the continuing pursuit of the loyalist group, which was fast disintegrating. Caswell, however, was proud to relate that "Our officers and men behaved with the spirit and intrepidity becoming freemen contending for their dearest privileges."

Scouts were dispatched to learn of the indicated escape routes which the loyalists would use and they had orders to collect articles of value discarded by the enemy. Troops were designated to apprehend any suspected loyalist and to disarm him. Troops in the Wilmington garrison were to help. A rider went out to tell Col. James Martin, in occupation of Cross Creek, to close in on the loyalists there. Resulting activity saw considerable excesses including plunder, persecution, and violence.

Many of the loyalists never stopped to rejoin their units, but much of the "Army" which did not reach the bridge made its way six miles back to the camp from which it had marched some hours before. Supplies were short, with "but two barrels of flour" to serve everyone, and it was soon obvious "that the Men were not to be keeped together and that the Officers had no authority over the Men." This was the awful news that was taken to General McDonald, whom the first arrivals found asleep in his tent.

A "Council of War" was "instantly called." The thought was that the Army should retire to Cross Creek and await "Govr Martin's pleasure." But earlier messengers had failed to get through to him and Cross Creek was in patriot hands. Colonel Martin was

there "with a large body of men." The Council concluded with the assumption that "it was needless to persist any longer in endeavoring to keep the Army together . . ." and many of the troops faded into the landscape.

Others, after available ammunition had been divided, remained as a group and decided to move together to Smith's Ferry, some 25 miles above Cross Creek, before disbanding. McDonald, still too ill to travel, remained in his tent. Events, however, were drawing to a fast climax.

The remnant of the loyalist group traveled only a few miles, to Black Mingo Creek, where they were surrounded by a party of mounted patriot militia and answered the demand for immediate surrender. McDonald was quickly located and taken to the patriot camp, presumably at Moores Creek. Here, with the dignity of an old warrior, he insisted on a formal surrender, the tendering of his sword, which, as was customary, Moore returned to him assuring him of good treatment. After his baggage was searched, he was conducted to the Halifax jail with a brief sojourn at New Bern.

The captives taken at Black Mingo Creek were led by their captors, reinforced by Col. Nicholas Long and some 500 men, to their destination at Smith's Ferry. Here they were searched, relieved of their weapons, ammunition and wagons, and paroled after taking an oath to bear no more arms against the patriots and the government. This was for the rank and file. The officers, however, were held and added to the growing number of prisoners in the Halifax jail. As Hugh McDonald

related: "our waggons and every thing were taken from us, the men were searched, and their ammunition was all taken from them . . . We all got passports and were permitted to return home, except our officers who were taken prisoners." Although only a boy, Hugh did not escape the search and was caught with "a large powder horn" which one of the men had "slipped into the seat of my old buckskin breeches, which was very large, and a long hunting shirt hung over it." He was excused, however, with only a beating administered by his father.

The pursuit of the loyalists under Moore's direction continued for some time. On March 10 it was reported that "Parties of Men are disposed all over the Country, apprehending all suspected persons, and disarming all Highlanders and Regulators that were put to rout in the late battle." It was further related that "The Conquerors" had already taken, as battle spoils, a rather impressive amount of men and materials. This included 350 "guns and shot-bags," some 150 "swords and dirks," and 1,500 "excellent rifles" as well as two "medicine chests fresh from England" (one valued at 300 pounds sterling), 13 wagons "with complete sets of horses," and 15,000 pounds sterling in money. The latter, made up mostly of "half Joaneses and Guineas" had been found buried in a stable at Cross Creek on a tip from a Negro of the area. Altogether some 850 "common Soldiers" were taken but most of these were simply "disarmed and discharged." The officers and leaders did not, however, fare so easily and many of them, including McDonald, were among those confined at Halifax.

Some 44 of these were named in a letter of March 10 and there was reference also to "sundry other Lieutenants and Ensigns." One prisoner was listed as "wounded through the thighs"; one was "a Midshipman," and another was a "Quarter-gunner of the Scorpion."

Loyalists in some number made their way quietly home and a few journeyed to Governor Martin aboard his ship. These traveled circuitously, by report requiring 397 miles to cover the 100 miles distance, and moved only at night to avoid detection. Martin found it hard to accept the news of defeat and, at least in his letters to England, kept an optimistic tone. He failed to note that he had miscalculated the strength of North Carolina loyalists and had called them into the field too soon.

James Moore, now a brigadier general, could report to the Provincial Council of North Carolina on March 2 after summarizing the campaign which had culminated at Moore's Creek: "Thus, sir, I have the pleasure to inform you, has most happily terminated a very dangerous insurrection, and will, I trust, put an effectual check to Toryism in this country."

His estimate was correct, but additional measures were needed. In due course the Provincial Assembly, encouraged by victory, began to take specific steps to punish loyalism, using even the denial of civil rights, the confiscation of property, and imprisonment. The net result was that a great number of British sympathizers came to leave North Carolina, especially Scotch Highlanders. Those that remained, as the English periodical Annual Register sagely observed, could not be expected to rise so readily again. This was quite true even when

Cornwallis entered the state again in 1781 on the road that eventually took him to Yorktown.

James Moore had conducted a finely planned and well executed campaign. He had set the stage for victory at a point and under circumstances of his own choosing. He gave promise of a brilliant military career, well deserving of his immediate promotion to the rank of brigadier-general, but an early death lay ahead for him.

Well-deserved credit went, too, to the field officer who commanded at the battle. Richard Caswell assumed this responsibility on his arrival at Moores Creek despite claims that Alexander Lillington commanded by virtue of his first arrival.[1] Caswell duly reported to his superiors after the battle and they in turn thanked him for the service and the victory. He, too, soon became a brigadier-general of militia with command in the New Bern District. John Ashe received a similar command in the Wilmington District.

The Halifax Resolve

The success at Moores Creek on February 27, the activity that preceded it, and the mopup that followed bred optimism among the patriots and the revolutionary leadership throughout the colonies and especially in North Carolina. It was a needed substantial boost to the thought of, and the desire for, independence. It was applauded throughout the colonies and it stimulated faith and belief by Americans

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1. The later Lillington boosters were persistent, however, even getting their lines in verse: "Moores Creek field, the bloody story where Lillington fought for Caswell glory."

in America.

Ezra Stiles, president of Yale, for example, wrote in his diary:

> The Colonels Moore, Martin, Caswell, Polk, Thackston, Lillington & Long, have great Merit; any one of these Gent. in this Country would be an over match for a Howe, Burgoyne, or a Clinton. Their knowledge of the Country and necessary Modes of Attack would frustrate any attempt fallen upon by the Characters last mentioned. The Whole Province in general considers Regulars in the Woods an easy Conquest.

A contemporary Carolinian in the Remembrancer observed: "It is inconceivable to imagine what joy this event diffused through this province. . . . Since I was born I never heard of so universal an ardor for fighting prevailing, and so perfect a union among all degrees of men."

This feeling of optimism and this surge toward independence carried into the Provincial Assembly of North Carolina when 148 delegates from 34 counties and 8 towns convened on April 4. It was on April 12, after due committee study, draft, and report, that this legislative body at Halifax passed the now famous, but sometimes overlooked resolution calling for independence.

This was recognized, even at the time, as a bold step, one that Virginia supplemented more fully and forthrightly in action in Williamsburg in the succeeding month of May. In April, however, North Carolina, in the full flush of the military victory at Moores Creek, acted alone. It reflected the temper of the representatives as described by the Assembly president, Sam Johnston, when he wrote

to his brother: "All our people here are up for independence."

The action was in the form of an endorsement of a committee resolution prefaced by an expressive preamble:

> It appears to your committee that pursuant to the plan concerted by the British ministry for the subjugating America, the King and Parliament of Great Britain have usurped a power over the persons and properties of the people unlimited and uncontrouled; and disregarding their humble petitions for peace, liberty, and safety, have made divers legislative acts, denouncing war, famine and every species of calamity against the continent in general: the British fleets and armies have been and still are daily employed in destroying the people and committing the most horrid devastations on the country: the governors in different colonies have declared protection to slaves who should imbrue their hands in the blood of their masters: that ships belonging to America are declared prizes of war, and many of them have been seized and confiscated. In consequence of all which, multitudes of the people have been destroyed, and from easy circumstances reduced to the most lamentable distress. And whereas the moderation hitherto manifested by the united colonies and their sincere desire to be reconciled to the mother country on constitutional principles, have procured no mitigation of the aforesaid wrongs . . . and no hopes remain of obtaining redress by those means alone which have been hitherto tried, your committee are of opinion that the house should enter into the following resolve, to wit:
>
> Resolved, That the delegates of this colony in the Continental congress be empowered to concur with the delegates of the other colonies in declaring independency, and forming foreign alliances, reserving to this colony the sole and exclusive right of forming a constitution and laws for this colony, and of appointing delegates from time to time (under the direction of a general representation thereof), to meet the delegates of the other colonies for such purposes as shall be hereafter pointed out.

This action was a recommendation to the Continental Congress and was sent to North Carolina's representatives in this body. Elbridge Gerry of Massachusetts called it a "noble and decisive measure." It remained for someone to implement this and to propose direct

action toward independence and separation from England. Virginia now did this and the end result was the Declaration of Independence.

The Disposition of Prisoners

There were other problems, too, before the April Assembly at Halifax. The first steps were taken for the organization of constitutional government in North Carolina. This was to take a little time and there would not be a working constitution until the fall of 1776. Richard Caswell, the victor at Moores Creek, would become the State's first governor under the new government.

In the matter of Moores Creek battle prisoners some imperative action was required, especially as the British expedition was expected almost daily. The jail at Halifax, for example, was full. The first action was the appointment of a committee to study individual cases and four classifications were drawn. There were those who were identified as prisoners who had served in Congress, those who had signed oaths, tests, or associations, and all men who had taken up arms but were not in the first two categories. The last group was of "prisoners under suspicious circumstances." Some fifty were paroled to return home and some others were paroled but required to change the community of their abode.[1]

Near the end of April, it was determined that 26 influential

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1. Not all were captured, as was the case of James Cotton, who fled as the battle opened, hid and went on to join General Clinton at Charleston, but sacrificed his wealth, position, and family in the doing. Much suffering for the loyalists and their families stemmed from their action in the Moores Creek campaign.

prisoners, including McDonald and some influential Highlanders, should be removed to Pennsylvania and that others should be sent to Virginia and Maryland for confinement until exchanged, or discharged, by Congress. In this way responsibility was transferred to the Continental Congress. Confinement was actually carried out at Reading, Pa., Fredrick, Md., and Staunton, Va.[1]

Some were to remain prisoners for an extended time, as Norman McLeod, who served almost five years, while others were to be exchanged or freed much earlier. In instances the prisoners fared much better than did their persecuted families who remained behind in North Carolina to suffer raiding, pillage, and arson in some excessive outbursts. Some were to serve the British again as did Duncan McNabb and Alexander McDonald at Savannah.

The Patriot Army Breaks Up

Following the battle at Moores Creek, Richard Caswell, as senior officer and commander in the engagement, from his camp at Long Creek on February 29 duly made his report. It was to President Cornelius Harnett of the Provincial Council who, due to the loyalist uprising, had called a meeting that assembled at New Bern. This

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1. Some 56 prisoners were in Virginia and passed, with stop at "Massaponacks Briges" near Fredericksburg, on May 9. John Harrower, a Scottish indentured servant tutor living nearby reported that he took "the boys" over to see these prisoners "taken at the late battle in North Carolina." The number included "ma/n/y Emigrants from Scotland," all officers, several being from "Ross Shire and the Isle of Sky." (The Journal of John Harrower edited by Edward M. Riley (Colonial Williamsburg, Williamsburg, Virginia, 1963), pp. 150-51.

was followed, on March 2, by a report from Wilmington on the entire campaign by James Moore. Immediately, the Council adopted resolutions giving praise and thanks to Moore and "all the brave officers and soldiers of every denomination for their late very important services rendered their country in effectually suppressing the late daring and dangerous insurrection of the Highlanders and the Regulators."

The reaction to the battle was exhilarating and the ability of quickly assembled troops had, it was felt, been proved. It was expensive, too, to keep a strong field force under arms and almost immediately plans were set to let most of the militia return home.

Caswell, on February 29, announced his intention to return to New Bern, having the permission of Moore. Once there, he hoped to receive orders to dismiss his troops. On March 2, Moore wrote that "to avoid as much as possible the heavy expenses unavoidly incurred by this expedition," he ordered Col. Martin to dismiss his troops, except for 1,000 including his regulars. His intent was soon to release all but the regulars who would remain for the present about Cross Creek.

Arrival of the British Expedition

Martin still, aboard his ship, spoke lightly of the Moores Creek defeat, implying "that the little check the Loyalists had received will not have any extensive ill consequences. All is recoverable by a body of troops penetrating into the country."

Very probably Sir Henry Clinton, who arrived to anchor in the Cape Fear on March 12, did not share his enthusiasm, for the British strategy depended on a sizable and strong loyalist support. The expected British expedition, not yet on hand, he probably knew would decide not to disembark in hostile territory.

Neither was there any element of surprise, since it was generally known that "Lord Cornwallis with seven regiments is expected to visit us every day. Clinton is now in Cape Fear with Governor Martin, who has about forty sail of vessels, armed and unarmed, waiting his arrival." Clinton could only wait. By landing his two companies he could give them and the two royal governors now aboard (Josiah Martin of North Carolina and William Campbell of South Carolina) an opportunity to stretch their legs. He, in his enforced idleness, became occupied in the natural history of the area and in the fables of the countryside.

Delayed by protracted storms after a slow start, Sir Peter Parker's fleet did not reach the North Carolina coast until late spring and then not as a unit. The first ships arrived on April 18 but all, except a few smaller vessels, were not on hand until May 3. The loyalist defeat at Moores Creek had, however, taken a necessary element out of the British plans and there was only organized resistance, no organized support, ashore.

The Halifax Assembly, still in session, felt alarm at the sight of the British in the Cape Fear. It directed all continental battalions to report to James Moore, a brigadier general since

March 1, and at the same time directed a draft of 1,500 militia from the eastern districts, regretting, perhaps the precipitate disbandment after the engagement at Moores Creek. Appeals went out for aid to the Continental Congress and to the neighboring colonies. It is said that the "Whigs of North Carolina now displayed a glorious ardor, and rushed with impetuosity to the scene of the expected conflict." One estimate is that 9,400 men soon collected along the Cape Fear, but perhaps the number was closer to 6,000. The approaches to Wilmington were fortified and boats were sunk in the channel approaching the town.

After consultation with Martin, General Clinton, on May 5, issued a proclamation inviting the populace to return to the support of their former government and away from their present government of committees and congresses. He offered pardon to essentially all who were in arms. But this was to no avail.

There were but two stated exceptions to the pardon offer, Robert Howe and Cornelius Harnett. The first was a well-proven revolutionary known for his numerous actions in this direction and now a brigadier general of troops in the field. The second was the chief civil officer of the Colony.

Two days later Clinton landed two regiments and made a reconnaissance in force into the interior. He did not, however, bring on any engagement. On the 12th, Cornwallis hastily threw another 900 men ashore, but there was only a skirmish in which he lost one killed with several being wounded, and one taken prisoner,

as he entered Brunswick. He burned a mill, said to be a patriot headquarters, and went several miles to plunder General Howe's plantation and to garner some 20 steers for army use. On the 15th five British regiments went into quarters at Fort Johnston and another nearby at Baldhead leaving only one on ship board. The larger part of the American force remained near Wilmington, where Moore drilled it vigorously twice daily. A considerable body was encamped several miles from Fort Johnston. Thus, matters stood for some days.

The British saw only hostility about them. Any success would be costly and probably lengthy. It would be subjugation rather than the support of a popular uprising as there was no longer evidence of organized loyalist activity. Thereupon it was reluctantly decided to give up the plan for a North Carolina campaign. The plan now became the alternate, an attack by army and navy on the port of Charleston. The British troops, grateful no doubt for the short stay ashore with its fresh air and country food, returned to their ships. Near the end of May, Governor Martin with them, they weighed anchor in the Cape Fear and set sail to reappear off Charleston in the early days of June. When the news of Moores Creek had reached England, it prompted the cabinet to call off the whole expedition, but communications were slow then and word had not come through to Parker, Clinton, or Cornwallis.

The Attack on Charleston

The appearance of the British fleet (some 40 to 50 sail) off

Charleston Bar in the first days of June produced alarm and consternation throughout the city and the countryside. This was despite some advance word and considerable preparation which was now being intensified. Before Parker and Clinton lay Charleston harbor flanked on the outer left by James Island, and more immediately on the right by Sullivan's Island against which the main ship channel rested. Stretching northeastward from Sullivan's Island, and facing the ocean, was Long Island. Inside these was the harbor proper and the city. Fort Johnson on James Island was garrisoned by Col. Christopher Gadsden's 1st South Carolina Regiment. Nearer the city there were batteries at Haddrell's Point and even on the wharves. The crux of the matter was, however, the fort on Sullivan's Island, around which the coming action would turn.

Here Col. William Moultrie, who in the absence of Colonel Gadsden had directed much of the earlier military effort around Charleston, was pushing for completion of Fort Moultrie with the men of his 2nd South Carolina. Moultrie frankly admitted that "The Site of these /British/ vessels alarmed us very much" and he called for increased exertion.

The buildup in the Charleston area continued. North Carolina's Robert Howe came in shortly with a contingent of infantry, as did Colonel (the Reverend) Peter Muhlenburg with the Virginia 8th. Other units followed to join the local forces. The number grew upward to some six thousand. On the scene, too, came Gen. Charles Lee, recently

named commander of the newly formed Southern Department. He arrived in Charleston on June 6 from Williamsburg, Virginia, where he had set up for a time. He took a dim view of the value of Fort Moultrie and would have abandoned it but for South Carolina's President John Rutledge and others who valued it more importantly and hopefully.

The British planned to take and occupy Long Island with Clinton's troops and, with the fleet, to overrun and garrison nearby Sullivan's Island after reducing Moultrie's fort. Clinton saw Sullivan's Island as "the key to Rebellion Road and Charleston." This, he believed would control the harbor and become a base for future operations.

On June 9 Clinton's landing on Long Island began and the next day Parker moved over the outer bar to poise for a strike which adverse winds would delay for more than two weeks. The naked sand bank of Long Island was essentially undefended and by June 16 Clinton had established his 3,000 troops here without incident. On Sullivan's Island, however, Moultrie had 800 troops and a battery of two pieces behind entrenchments facing "The Breach," the water barrier that separated Long and Sullivan's Islands. These were Col. William Thompson and men of the South Carolina 3rd. Farther along Sullivan's Island facing the channel stood Fort Moultrie. The 380 men, behind the 16-feet-thick, sand-filled palmetto log walls of the fort, were at their gun stations though ammunition, especially powder, was in relatively short supply.

On the 28th the gentle sea breeze which Parker needed stirred and his four-pronged maneuver got underway. The heavy division

(Solebay of 28 guns, Experiment of 50, Active with 28, and the flagship Bristol with 50) bore down on Fort Moultrie while the lighter division (the frigates Sphynx - 20, Actaeon - 28, and Syren - 28) moved to the south toward a position which would enfilade an unfinished face of the fort with starboard broadsides and hammer the batteries at Haddrell's Point. The mortar ship Thunder Bomb and the frigate Friendship were detailed to shell Moultrie from the southeast. Two small units were to help Clinton in crossing "The Breach." But all did not go well.

The British troops on Long Island could not pass to Sullivan's Island for the expected fordable connection at "The Breach" did not exist. Instead of 18 inches of water there were seven feet, much to Clinton's "unspeakable mortification and disappointment." Suitable boats for the passage were not at hand and the help sent on the 28th was of little value. Only a token effort was made.

At Charleston, the British army and navy again found close co-operation and synchronization difficult. When the mortar on the Thunder Bomb was overcharged it sprang loose and no useful fire came against Fort Moultrie from its direction. The light division of frigates began to move into place but ran aground on the sand bars of the harbor's middle ground shoals, where Fort Sumter would later rise, and became ineffective. One ship, the Actaeon, refused to clear and, early the next day, her crew set fire and blew her up in the early morning. But Parker's heavy division moved on course.

At 11:00 a.m. the British warships moved in, then let go their anchors. Fire orders followed. They enjoyed an advantage of 10 to 1 in ordnance over that in Fort Moultrie. The fort's spongy palmetto logs and sand, however, absorbed the heavy, rapid fire while its guns returned slow, well directed, and deliberate reply. It was effective and Moultrie's men did not panic. Parker could make no headway against Moultrie and its guns and now unfavorable tide and wind would not allow him to withdraw.

The American fire was stinging. Some ships ran aground; others had difficulty with the channel. All day the artillery continued and when the fort's flag, a blue field with a white crescent, went down, Sgt. William Jasper placed it on a sponge staff and carried it back into place. Even Charles Lee admitted that: "The behavior of the garrison, both men and officers, with Colonel Moultrie at their head, I confess astounded me. It was brave to the last degree. I had no idea that so much coolness and intrepidity could be displayed by a collection of raw recruits." In the evening about 9:30, finally, Parker was able to draw back out of range of the fort guns. It was over. The infantry from Long Island would be removed later.

In the battle there had been loss and damage. Parker had 225 casualties and, by report, he himself took a shell splinter that "ruined his Britches" which were "quite torn off, his backside laid bare, his thigh and knee wounded." The Bristol was "hulled" 70 times while the Experiment lost 23 and 50 respectively in killed and wounded. In the eleven-hour bombardment the fort, by estimate, absorbed some

7,000 rounds of shell with only 10 killed and 24 wounded.

After the repulse, witnessed by royal governors Martin and Campbell, Parker, Clinton, and Cornwallis lingered off Charleston for a time. Eventually they decided against further attack here and in the Cape Fear area and hoisted sail and moved off to the northeast for New York. The first British expedition against the rebelling colonists had failed. The next campaign (and now there would have to be others) would come in a different quarter.

It was not until late September, however, that all British vessels were removed from the Cape Fear, to the northward. Here James Moore watched them all summer. At that time, after burning the sloop of war Cruizer and two tenders, they departed.

The Failure of the British Campaign

Actually the initial British effort which hoped and expected to capitalize on loyalist support had been dealt its death blow on February 27 at Moore Creek Bridge. As Edward Channing has succinctly concluded: "Had the South been conquered in the first half of 1776, it is entirely conceivable that rebellion would never have turned into revolution," but "At Moore's Creek and Sullivan's Island the Carolinians turned aside the one combination of circumstances that might have made British conquest possible." There is little wonder then that the Battle of Moores Creek Bridge came to be known as "The Lexington and Concord of the South." Allen French, in his The First Year of the American Revolution, has observed that "The fumbling and delay of the

British southern expedition brought unity to the Americans, with results that would be shown when once the contestants came to grips." For the present a significant American defensive victory had gained two full years of peace for the south and set the stage for the long struggle ahead. The southern plan had brought a sharp reverse to the British and, at the same time, considerable elation and hope to the Americans.

Appendix A

A Narrative of the Proceedings of a Body of Loyalists in North Carolina

His Excellency Governor Martin wrote a Letter to Mr Alexd McLean the 17th day of Novr last desiring him to go to a Number of Loyal Subjects in several Counties, and to find out from them the Number of People he would with certainty bring in the King's Standard, when an order to the Purpose was given, upon the receipt of which Letter Capt McLean went to the different Counties to the respective Gentlemen mentioned, and made them all take an Oath of Secrecy as directed, after which they all had a Meeting and concluded Unanimously yt /that/ they could bring at least 3000 men to his Excellency with 1500 Stand of Arms, which report Capt McLean brought to his Excellency by many of the most respectable people mentioned in the Letter, this Report was from the people called Loyalists, upon this report, Governor Martin wrote a Commission of power, directed to a Number of the Scots Gentlemen and to these people; which was brought them by Mr McLean dated the 10th day of Jany ordering to assemble and array all his Majesty's loyal Subjects in Arms and impowering the Commissioners to appoint a Capt Lieutt and Ensign to every fifty men, upon this Commission being delivered to Mr McLean he immediately went to Crosscreek where he consulted with Mr William Campbell, Mr Neil McArthur & Capt Donald McLeod. It was concluded by them that circular letters should be sent to all the people concerned to have a Meeting the 5 day of Feby at a friend's

House and determine on our future Proceedings. Of the Commissioners, only four amongst the Loyalists appeared, all of the Scots were present, and were all of Opinion that Men ought not to be Assembled till the 1st of March, but in case the British Troops came in before that time to get up after their Arrival; the Loyalists insisted upon taking up Arms immediately, and as the greatest dependance was from them, the Scots gave way to their Opinion and assured them whenever they acquainted them of any Body of Men assembled, they immediately would get their Men together, at the same time gave them to Understand that they were not to depend upon any Number from them, above Six or Seven Hundred Men, at which they replyed that instead of the 3000, they promised, they made themselves sure of bringing 5000 Men to the field, and that even then they had 500 Men in a Body, upon which it was agreed that Capt Donald McLeod being an Experienced officer should go with the Gentlemen Loyalists then present, and put and keep them in the best order possible he could, that Mr Wm Campbell, Capt Stewart, Capt McNicol and Mr McLean should follow in three days to assist Capt McLeod in conducting the Regulators, to Crosscreek, being the place of general rendezvous, upon the 8th Feby being the day appointed. These Gentlemen set off from Crosscreek, twelve miles from which they met an Express from Capt Donald McLeod informing that all the Loyalists dispersed and that he could not even get amongst them a Guide to conduct him back. Notwithstanding of this bad news Mr Wm Campbell and Mr McLean pursued their journey 40 miles further and next day the 9th they sent an

Express to Messrs Hunter and Feild expressing their surprise at their behaviour and entreating them in the most Anxious manner for sake of their Honour and the Kings cause not to fail in calling their Men together and that they only wanted their Answer to join them. The Express went to their different Houses and could get no intelligence of them, heard from their Neighbors that they were Sculking and hiding themselves through Swamps and such concealed places upon return of the Express, Messrs Campbell & McLean went off the 10th to Crosshill in Cumberland County where Capt McDonald of Kingsborough, Capt Alexr McLeod, Colo Cotton with many other Gentlemen were Assemgled with about 500 Highlanders and Country born. Notwithstanding of this disappointment of the Loyalists it was determined, as so many Men were embodied at Crosshill, to keep them together and endeavor as formidable a Body as possible. Mr Wm Campbell went that same day to Crosscreek to influence the friends of Government to stand firm, Colo Rutherford assured him that he would stand by him and others of his Loyal friends to the last, which promise he faithfully performed by coming to the field with near five Hundred Highlanders: upon the 12 day of Feby all the Men incamped at Crosshill marched for Crosscreek under the Command of Capt McDonald, Capt McLeod and Colo Cotton. Upon holding a Council that day it was arranged that Capt Dond McLeod and Mr McLean should go up to the loyalists and endeavour to encourage them to assemble their Men again. After going about 35 miles they met Docr Pyle with about 40 Men with whom they returned to Crosscreek.

Upon meeting with Pyle, Expresses were sent to the rest of the Loyalists which brought at different times 90 Men which made up 130 in all from these people. They join'd the Camp at Crosscreek the 14th: It is well known that the leaders amongst these people deceived the people by assuring them that his Excellency Govr Martin was to meet them at Crosscreek with a thousand regulars, which when they found not to be the case, they concluded to be imposed upon, and was certainly the true cause of their not raising and it is the candid Opinion of the Subscribers that these people will still readily embrace the first Oppony (when properly supported) of raising and taking up arms in support of his Majestys Government. The 15th an Order was issued to all the Captains to make a return of the strength of their Companys when the Army was found to consist of 1400 Men with only 520 Stand of Arms, an Order was passed to embody a Number of light Horse to secure the Country and bring in all the Arms they could find belonging to the Rebels. In three days being the time the Camp remained at Crosscreek about 130 stand of Arms were brought in, during which time there was taken from the Committee of Cumberland between 1000 and 1200 wt /weight/ of Powder, which the Merchants of Crosscreek had lodged in their hands to prevent its falling into the hands of disaffected people. 18th left Crosscreek and encamped four miles below it: next day the 19th all the men with Arms was ordered to parade having in View to attack Moors Provisional Army in their entrenchments that Night at Rockfish. Within four miles of our Camp, some of the Soldiers suspecting that such a project was in

view one Capt. Sneed with two Companys of Colo Cottons Corps ran off with their arms very early that night: that evening Farguard Campbell came to the Camp and gave information that Caswell with 600 men was Marchg /marching/ thro' Duplin County in order to join Moors Army at Rockfish. Upon this intellegence there was an order for Crossing Cape Fear River next day the 20th in order to fall in with Casswell and prevent his joining Moore. Before the March a Speech was made to the Soldiers encouraging them, and to consider the glorious cause they engaged in and in serving their King and being the instruments of relieving this Country from the Tiranical oppression it now groans under, and in claiming against those base Rascals that deserted the Night before, if any amongst them there was so faint hearted as not to serve with that resolution of conquering or dying. This was the time for such to declare themselves, upon which there was a general huza for the King except from about 20 men of Colo Cotton's Corps who laid down their arms and declared their Courage was not War-proof. The Army was ordered to March to Campbelltown to Cross the river which took up all that day and Night. Capt Alexr McLeod was ordered with a Detachment of 100 Highlanders which crossed the river first, to March immediately for black river Bridge 15 miles off to secure it, next day the 21st The Army Marched and encamped the North side of the Bridge, before the Waggons could pass they had to work four hours in mending it. 22nd. Marched 10 miles and took two of the Rebels, one of whom was a spy from Moor's Camp, the other gave information that Casswell changed his Rout and

was Marching for Wilmington. The 23d Marched 10 miles which day the Command of the Horse was given to Capt Dond McLeod and Frans. Fraser his Lieut. Capt McLeod went all day about 2 miles before the Army, sent word about 12 o'clock, that the Enemy was within 4 miles of us, upon which the Commanding Officers ordered a Halt and desired the Principal Officers to array their men in Battle order and all the broadswords in the Army was given to 80 able bodied highlanders who turned out Volunteers, and put themselves under the Command of Capt Jno Campbell with orders to March in the Centre of the Army. All necessary orders for an Attack being adjusted the Army Marched in full spirts the Horse in front. Mr Fraser spying five of the Rebels light horse pursued them and had taken two of them one of whom discharged his Rifle at him but luckily missed him. The prisoners being examined it was found that Casswell had crossed black River two days before then with a thousand men and entrenched himself quite round and that he sunk all the flats and Boats on his own side of the River. Upon which intelligence the Army was ordered to encamp within four miles of the River. Capt Dond McLeod with a party of the light Horse went to the River where he found by a Negro fellow that there was a flat sunk upon the other side of the River. He employed the Negro to rise the flat and bring it to him, then sent him to acquaint the Army that he secured it and remained there with his party to have it in Readiness upon their Arrival. Sunday the 25th. Marched 6 miles. Early in the morning the Army was put in motion and began to cross the River. As soon as they

got to the flat Capt Dond McLeod with the Light Horse upon the Army's coming to the River Marched forward to a Saw miln three miles from the River where he fell in with and took twenty one Bullocks, two Waggon loads of Meal (that was going to Casswell's Camp) and about twenty men in the Number of whom was one Colo Renon and Capt Homes. When the Army Marched to the flat Messrs McLean and Fraser were left with a few men, a Drum and a Pipe to amuse Casswell as if the Army meant to cross the River and /in/ force at his entrenchments. They kept firing there the most of the day which kept Casswell and his men in their Camp. Capt Morse of the light horse returned to the flat where the Army was crossing the River and brought intelligence that 200 men were upon their March to join Casswell that night and that they were to pass about 3 or 4 miles in our front at the Saw miln where the Provision and Prisoners were taken. Upon which information Mr Wm Campbell was detached with the Loyalists in order to stop their March and as soon as they could cross the River Mr McDond Kingsborough /was/ to support Capt Dond McLeod and Mr Campbell /and the/100 highlanders he had under his Command. Monday 26th Marched Ten miles, the Army and their Baggage crossed black River, marched forward and joined the detached parties about eight o'clock in the morning when it was unanimously agreed that Casswell should be attacked immediately the Army being in motion for that Purpose. Intelligence was brought that Casswell had Marched at 8 o'clock the Night before and had taken possession of the Bridge upon widow Moore's Creek. A party went to examine

his abandoned Camp and found there some horses and Provisions which the Precipitancy of their March made them leave behind them. That evening Mr Hepburn was sent to the Enemy's Camp with offers of Reconciliation upon their returning to their duty and laying down their Arms, who upon his return to Camp informed us that Casswell had taken up his Ground 6 miles from us upon our side of the Bridge upon widow Moore's Creek and that it was very Practicable to attack them. A Concel [Council] of War being immediately called, it was unanimously agreed that the Enemy's Camp should directly be attacked. The Army was immediately order'd under arms and about one o'clock Tuesday morning the 27th We march'd Six miles with 800 men. In the front of our Encampment was a very bad Swamp, which took us a good deal of time to pass so that it was within an hour of Daylight before we could get to their Camp. Upon our entering the Ground of their Encampment, we found their fires beginning to turn weak and Concluded that the Enemy were marched. Our Army entered their Camp in three Columns but upon finding that they left their ground, orders were directly given to reduce the Columns and form the Line of Battle within the verge of the Wood (it not being yet day) and the Army should retire a little from the Rear in order to have the Wood to cover us from the sight of the Enemy, the word of Rallement being King George and Broad Swords. Upon hearing a shot on the plain in our front betwixt us and the and the bridge the whole Army made a Halt and soon thereafter a

firing began at the end of the Bridge, it being still dark. The Signals for an Attack was given, which was Three cheers the Drum to beat, the Pipes to play. The Bridge lying above a Cannon Shot in our front upon a deep miry Creek Mr McLean with a party of about 40 men came Accidently to the Bridge, he being a Stranger and it being still dark. He was challenged by the Enemies' Centinels they observing him sooner than he observed them. He answered tht /that/ he was a friend: they asked to whom. He being a stranger he replyed to the King. Upon his making this reply they squatted down upon their faces to the Ground. Mr McLean uncertain but they might be some of our own people that had crossed the Bridge, challenged them in Gallic to which they made no Answer. Upon which he fired his own piece and ordered his party to fire. Upon the fireing turng /turning/ more general in that place Capt Donald McLeod and Capt Jno Campbell repaired to the Bridge and endeavg to cross they were both Killed and most of the men that followed them. During the time of the fireing the most of the Country born Army began to run away and could not be made to stand their Ground, the Loyalists excepted, The people being called away from the Bridge and we retired with the Army to Camp, where when we arrived we found that we had but two barrels of flour to serve the whole Army, that the men were not to be keeped together and that the Officers had no Authority over the Men. A Councel of War being instantly called it was proposed that the Army should retire to Crosscreek and there fortify ourselves till Govr Martin's pleasure should be known, to whom an Express was

sent the day before, but that we understood he was taken by the Enemy but that still another would be sent away to him, which remonstrance had no weight. In short we found it needless to persist any longer in endeavouring to keep the Army together, therefore thought it most adviseable to destroy the Ammunition to prevent its falling to the Enemys hands.

Upon the evening of the 27th Feby Capt McLean, Stewart and McNicol and Mr Wm Campbell set off for Crosscreek. When they came within 5 miles of the place they found that it was in the hands of 2000 of the Rebels who were going on with all manner of irregularities. They thought it most adviseable to endeavour to make the best of their way to Govr Martin, from the different courses we were forced to take. We travelled 397 miles (the strait course being only 100 miles). In the course of our Journey we found the people in general very well affected to Government, such as we durst discover ourselves to declared that they would assemble upon seeing a proper support of Military force. It is true as we were obliged to travel in the Night we had not access to see so many of them as otherways we might nor indeed did we think it prudent to discover ourselves but seldom.

This Account is in General Howe's Letter of April 25, 1776, and can be found in the British Records Colonial Office, 1776 (C.O.5, Volume 93, pages 297 ff.) and in

transcription in the North Carolina Department of Archives and History (Raleigh, N.C.) from which this was taken. Alexander McLean was one of its authors.

Appendix B

Letter from Col. Richard Caswell to Cornelius Harnett, President of the Provincial Congress of North Carolina

Camp at Long Creek, February 29, 1776

Sir:-I have the pleasure to acquaint you that we had an engagement with the Tories at Widow Moore's Creek Bridge, on the 27th current. Our army was about one thousand strong, consisting of the Newbern battalion of minutemen, the militia from Craven, Johnston, Dobbs, and Wake, and a detachment of the Wilmington battalion of minute-men, which we found encamped at Moore's Creek the night before the battle, under the command of Colonel Lillington: the Tories by common report, were three thousand; but General McDonald, whom we have a prisoner, says there were about fifteen or sixteen hundred. He was unwell that day, and not in the battle. Captain Macleod, who seemed to be the principal commander, with Captain John Campbell, are among the slain.

The number killed and mortally wounded, from the best accounts I was able to collect, was about thirty: most of them were shot on passing the bridge. Several had fallen into the water, some of whom, I am pretty certain, had not risen yesterday evening when I left the camp. Such prisoners as we have made, say there were at least fifty of their men missing.

The Tories were totally put to the rout, and will certainly disperse. Colonel Moore arrived at our camp a few hours after the engagement was over. His troops came up that evening, and are now

encamped on the ground where the battle was fought: and Colonel Martin is at or near Cross Creek, with a large body of men. Those, I presume, will be sufficient effectually to put a stop to any attempt to embody again. I therefore, with Colonel Moore's consent, am returning to Newbern, with the troops under my command, where I hope to receive your orders to dismiss them. There I intend carrying the General.

If the Council should rise before my arrival, be pleased to give order in what manner he shall be disposed of. Our officers and men behaved with the spirit and intrepidity becoming freemen contending for their dearest privileges.

This is as given in Henry B. Dawson, Battles of the United States by Sea and Land (New York, 1858), 1, 132-33.

Appendix C

Extract of a Letter from Brigadier General James Moore to Cornelius Harnett, President of the Provincial Council of North Carolina

Wilmington, March 2, 1776

On the earliest intelligence that the tories were collecting and embodying at Cross Creek, which I received on the 9th of February, I proceeded to take possession of Rockfish-bridge, within seven miles of Cross Creek, which I considered as an important post. This I effected on the 15th, with my own regiment, five pieces of artillery and a part of the Bladen militia; but as our numbers were by no means equal to that of the tories, I thought it most advisable to intrench and fortify that pass, and wait for a reinforcement. By the 9th, I was joined by Col. Lillington with one hundred and fifty of the Wilmington minute-men, Colonel Kenon with 200 of the Duplin militia, and Colonel Ash with about 100 of the volunteer independent yagers, making our number then in the whole about 1100; and from the best information I was able to procure, the tory army, under the command of General McDonald, amounted to about 14 or 1500 hundred. On the 20th they marched within four miles of us, and sent in, by a flag of truce, the Governor's proclamation, a manifesto, and letter from the General, copies of which, together with another letter, and my answer you have enclosed. I then waited only until Col. Martin and Col. Thackston, who I had certain intelligence were on the march, should get near enough to cut off their retreat, and determined to avail myself of the first favorable

opportunity of attacking them. However, contrary to my expectations, I learnt on the 21st that they had, the night before, and that night [morning?], crossed the N. West River, at Campbelltown, with their whole army, sunk and destroyed all their boats, and taken their route the most direct way to Negro Head Point; I then dispatched an express to Col. Caswell, who was on his march to join us with about 800 men, and directed him to return and take possession of Corbert's [Corbett's] Ferry over Black River, and by means in his power to obstruct, harrass, and distress, them in their march; at the same time I directed Col. Martin and Col. Thackston to take possession of Cross Creek, in order to prevent their return that way. Col. Lillington and Col. Ash I ordered, by a forced march, to endeavor, if possible, to reinforce Col. Caswell; but if that could not be effected, to take possession of Moore's Creek Bridge whilst I proceeded back with the remainder of our army to cross the North West, at Elizabeth Town, so as either to meet them on their way to Corbert's Ferry, or fall in their rear and surround them there. On the twenty-third I crossed the river at Elizabeth-Town, where I was compelled to wait for a supply of provisions till the 24th at night, having learnt that Col. Caswell, was almost entirely without. Just when I was prepared to march, I received an express from Col. Caswell, informing that the tories had raised a flat, which had been sunk in Black River, about five miles above him, and by erecting a bridge, had passed it with their whole army. I then determined, as the last expedient, to proceed immediately in boats

down the North West river to Dollison's Landing, about sixty miles, and take possession of Moore's Creek Bridge, about ten miles from them, at the same time acquainting Col. Caswell of my intentions, and recommending him to retreat to Moore's Creek Bridge, if possible, but if not, to follow on in the rear. The next day by four o'clock we arrived at Dollison's Landing, but we could not possibly march that night for want of horses for the artillery; I dispatched an express to Moore's Creek Bridge to learn the situation of affairs there, and was informed that Col. Lillington, who had the day before taken his stand at the bridge, was that after noon reinforced by Col. Caswell, and that they had raised a small breast work, and destroyed a part of the Bridge. The next morning, the 27th, at break of day, an alarm gun was fired, immediately after which, scarcely allowing our people a moment to prepare, the tory army, with Capt. McLeod at their head, made their attack on Col. Caswell and Col. Lillington, and finding a small intrenchment next the Bridge, on our side empty, concluded that our people had abandoned their post, and in the most furious manner advanced within thirty paces of our breastwork and artillery, where they met a very proper reception.

Captain McLeod and Captain Campbell fell within a few paces of the breast-work, the former of whom received upwards of twenty balls through his body, and in a very few minutes their whole army was put to flight, and most shamefully abandoned their General, who was next day taken prisoner. The loss of the enemy in this action,

from the best accounts we have been able to learn, is about thirty killed and wounded; but as numbers of them must have fallen into the creek, besides many more that were carried off, I suppose their loss may be estimated at about seventy. We had only two wounded, one of which died to-day. This Sir, I have the pleasure to inform you, has happily terminated a very dangerous insurrection, and will, I trust, put an effectual check to toryism in this country.

The situation of affairs at this place made it necessary for me to return here, which, at the special request of the committee, I did last night with my regiment. The large requisitions made by the men-of-war, who now lie just before the town, gave the inhabitants reason to apprehend everything that could be suffered from their disappointed vengeance, however the committee have spiritedly determined rather to suffer the worst of human evils than afford them any supplies at all, and I have no doubt we shall be able to prevent them from doing any great injury.

In order to lessen as much as possible the expense incurred by this expedition, I some time ago directed Col. Martin to disband all the troops under his command, except 1000, including the regulars, and with those to secure the persons and estates of the insurgents, subject to your further orders.

And then to proceed to this place, unless otherwise directed. However, as I do not think the service just now requires such a number of men in arms, I shall immediately direct them to disband

all except the regulars, and with those to remain in and about Cross Creek until further orders.

As given in

The State Records of North Carolina, 11 (Winston, N. C. 1895), 283-85.

Appendix D

A Newspaper Account of the Battle

This morning, the North Carolina minute men and militia under the command of Brigadier-General James Moore, had an engagement with the Tories, at Widow Moore's Creek bridge. At the break of day, an alarm gun was fired, immediately after which, scarcely leaving the Americans a moment to prepare, the Tory army, with Captain McCloud [Donald McLeod] at their head, made their attack on Colonels Caswell and Lillington, posted near the bridge, and finding a small intrenchment vacant, concluded that the Americans had abandoned their post. With this supposition, they advanced in a most furious manner over the bridge. Colonel Caswell had very wisely ordered the planks to be taken up, so that in passing they met with many difficulties. On reaching a point within thirty paces of the breast-works, they were received with a very heavy fire, which did great execution. Captains McCloud [McLeod] and [Farquard] Campbell were instantly killed, the former having nine bullets and twenty-four swan shot through and into his body. The insurgents retreated with the greatest precipitation, leaving behind them some of their wagons, &c. They cut their horses out of the wagons and mounted three upon a horse. Many of them fell into the creek and were drowned. Tom Rutherford ran like a lusty fellow; - both he and Felix Keenan were in arms against the Carolinians, and they by this time are prisoners, as is Lieutenant-Colonel [James]

Cotton, who ran at the first fire. The battle lasted three minutes. Twenty-eight of the Tories, besides the two captains, are killed or mortally wounded, and between twenty and thirty taken prisoners, among whom is his Excellency General Donald McDonald. This, we think, will effectually put a stop to Toryism in North Carolina.

From:

Frank Moore's Diary of the American Revolution from Newspapers and Original Documents (New York, 1890), 1, 209-10, which quotes from the New York Packet of March 28, 1776, and the Pennsylvania Evening Post of March 23, 1776.

Appendix E

A Loyalist View in Perspective

The narrative below is from the account of John Ferdinand Dalziel Smyth describing his travels through various parts of the United States, an account published in London in 1784. Unfortunately he does not date his travels though obviously they came after the events described. Smyth, following medical studies at Edinburgh, came to Williamsburg about 1770 to establish a practice. In the Revolution he was an active Loyalist in Virginia and Maryland. He returned to England in 1783 and there drew an annual pension of three hundred pounds on the basis of service as a captain in the Queen's rifles and for property losses in America.[1] His Loyalist sympathies are quite evident in the narrative here which covers a part of his travels into central and eastern North Carolina.

> This ordinary, where I lodged, is situated at the crossing of two great public roads, viz. that from the Moravian towns (in which I have journied . . .) to Wilmington, Brunswick, &c. on the coast of the Atlantic, and the lower road or great trading path from Hillsborough to Salisbury, &c. which now was the way for me to proceed by.
>
> Accordingly, in the morning, I took my left-hand cross-road, and after a long, but pleasant, ride down the eastern side of Allamance Creek, I arrived at night at the house of a Mr. Michael Holt, a Dutchman

1. Thomas D. Clark (Editor), Travels in the Old South: A Bibliography (Norman, Oklahoma, 1956), Item No. 62, 2, 60-62.

whose plantation was adjoining the creek, near the place where it enters the Haw River; having observed that I rode over a great deal of excellent land during these two days, the last of which I likewise travelled at least fifty miles.

Mr. Holt, though a High Dutchman, or rather the son of Dutch and German parents, for he himself was born in America, is a very loyal subject, and entertained me with great hospitality. He is a magistrate, possesses a considerable property, and has a large share of good sense and sound judgement, but without the least improvement from education, or the embellishment of any kind of polish, even in his exterior.

In the course of a long interesting conversation, with which he entertained me, and really afforded me a great deal of satisfaction and information by his sensible, blunt, and shrewd remarks on every subject occasionally, he explained the whole grounds, proceedings, and termination of that most unfortunate and much to be lamented affair of the Regulators, which made so great a noise in North Carolina, their scene of action, as well as in all America besides.

But, to avoid throwing reflections and censure, however just or otherwise, on characters of persons still in existence, out of whose power it is now even to atone for their former, perhaps ill-timed, unfortunate, and mistaken conduct, I shall suffer it to rest in oblivion, only observing that those unhappy, ill-fated victims, the Regulators of North Carolina, were, and still are among the worthiest, steadiest, and most respectable friends to British government and real constitutional freedom. But oppression, misrepresentation, and ill-fortune seem ever

to have been the attendants on, and inauspicious state of exemplary loyalty and virtue.

I left Mr. Holt on the second day after breakfast, and crossing the Haw River, &c at a very good ford, arrived at Hillsborough to dinner, having rode only about twenty-six miles.

/This Mr. Holt, of Orange County, some Americans from Guildford county, almost all the Chiefs of the former Regulators, and about fifty or sixty of the principal men of the Scots Highland Emigrants of the settlement of Cross Creek, all under the command of Lieutenant-colonel Donald Mac Donald, as brigadier-general (now in London), having received great encouragement and particular directions from Governor Martin, his Majesty's Governor of North Carolina, to array the loyal inhabitants as militia in arms, who are very numerous in this province, he having promised to support them with arms, ammunition, money, and troops, if they could penetrate as far as Wilmington, or Brunswick, before which he lay at anchor in the river of Cape Fear on board a vessel of war, accordingly raised and arrayed about fifteen hundred men within a few days.

But having very imprudently delayed time for several weeks afterwards, and having committed some other capital blunders and mistakes, which however they were in some measure compelled to do, much against Colonel Mac Donald's inclinations, and out of his power to prevent, this afforded the rebels an opportunity to assemble and collect in great force from every quarter around, to the number of six or eight thousand men, tolerably well armed, to oppose their progress.

Yet, in the face of so vast a superiority, this handful of brave men, without arms for one-sixth of their number and even these almost entirely destitute of ammunition, marched boldly on, forcing their way, with great spirit and resolution, for eighty miles to More's Creek Bridge, within sixteen miles of Wilmington.

Here (on finding themselves unsupported, Colonel Mac Donald also being very sick, and unable to command) by falling into divisions and dissensions among themselves and other injudicious measures, in attempting to cross this rivulet in the face of works thrown up and lined by very superior numbers of the enemy under cover, and supported likewise by several pieces of artillery, at a place where it was not fordable, upon a wooden bridge, the planks of which had been taken up, and the beams and sleepers greased and rendered slippery and impassable by the rebels, they met with a total defeat, several being killed, (particularly a gallant officer, Captain Mac Leod, &c.) fighting bravely with the broad swords.

General Mac Donald, who, as I have already mentioned, happened then to be extremely ill, and almost all their officers being taken prisoner, were treated with the utmost rigour and barbarity, to a degree scarcely credible among civilized nations.

These gentlemen were all dragged through the country in triumph, in the most distressed miserable condition, destitute even of common necessaries, and were at last distributed in prisons and wretched places of restraint, constructed for the particular purposes of cruelty, through the distant inland parts of Virginia, Maryland, and Pensylvania; and

very few of them indeed have ever been able to return to their unhappy, disconsolate, helpless families and homes.

General Mac Donald, Mr. Holt, and about thirty of the principal persons amongst them, were brought to Philadelphia in that wretched condition, and thrown into prison, where I, being then also in close confinement in the same place, had the melancholy, mortifying satisfaction of seeing and conversing with my old friendly, hospitable Dutchman once more: however, he contrived to make interest with the Congress to permit him to return again to his family and home, which they also granted to all of them who were natives of America, excepting a very worthy officer, Captain Leggit.

But the gallant brave old general, a man then near seventy years of age, who had been almost half a century an officer in his majesty's service, was most ignominiously and inhumanly treated, being rigidly and cruelly confined in a close room, secured with iron doors and bars, along with nine gentlemen besides, in the most sultry weather, and hot climate, during the summer; for he magnanimously and nobly declined their offers of partial indulgence to himself, unless it was extended to the rest of his officers, which the Congress, to its eternal disgrace and infamy, absolutely refused, for no reason whatsoever but on account of their zealous and exemplary loyalty and resolution.

This worthy old officer General Mac Donald was at length exchanged along with General Prescott, for an American Colonel Mac Gaw, and the American General Alexander, or pretended Earl of Stirling.7

from John Ferdinand Dalziel Smyth,

A Tour of the United State of America (London, 1784), Volume I, pages 226-233.

Appendix F

Battlefield Commemoration

Interest in the commemoration of the events of the Moores Creek engagement of February 27, 1776, and in the preservation and interpretation of the battlefield seem to have been generated initially by an article of February 4, 1856, which appeared in the Fayetteville, North Carolina, Observer. It called for the celebration of the 80th anniversary of the battle and this followed in due course some three weeks later. Plans were projected then for a monument on the grounds and the laying of its cornerstone was a special feature of the 1857 anniversary observance. Work was delayed, however, and interest waned for a time.

In 1876 the centennial anniversary was the occasion for new activity and a gala observance of the anniversary date. In 1897 the North Carolina legislature authorized the purchase of up to 20 acres to be set aside as a public park in commemoration of the battle. This led to the purchase, for $1,100, of two acres encompassing the patriot camp site and the old breastworks, followed by the acquisition of an additional eight acres.

In 1899 the Moores Creek Monumental Association was formed and was incorporated to take charge of the battleground, being granted a small appropriation from the State for the purpose. James F. Moore of Currie was its first president, and he held this office until his death in 1912. There were occasional anniversary

observances,becoming more regular as the years passed. The observance in 1907 was aided substantially by a Federal appropriation. This covered the erection of the monument to the Heroic Women of the Lower Cape Fear, repairs to the "Old Monument," and various structures for the grounds. Also, 1907 saw the addition of 20 acres to the Park. Over the next two decades, there was increased attention to the battlefield and various monuments were added.

In 1925 the North Carolina legislature authorized the transfer of the area to the Federal Government and petitioned Congress to accept title for the United States. This was done on June 2, 1926. The area became Moores Creek National Military Park and was placed under the administration of the War Department. It was in 1929, under the authority which created the national military park, that the bodies of Ezekiel and Mary (Polly) Slocumb were disinterred at Mt. Olive (some 100 miles to the north) and reburied at the base of the Heroic Women's Monument.[1] In August 1933, by Executive Order of the President, the Park was transferred from the jurisdiction of the War Department to that of the United States Department of the Interior and made a part of the National Park System. The Park presently embraces an area of about 50 acres.

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1. This stemmed from what now seems to be unreliable legend. The night before the battle Mrs. Mary Slocumb, as the story goes, dreamed that her husband lay critically wounded on the battlefield. Taking her horse, she rode hard all night from the vicinity of their home on the Neuse River 65 miles away. She arrived at Moores Creek to find her husband, Lieutenant Ezekiel Slocumb, dirty and tired but unharmed. Thereupon she proceeded to give aid to the others needing it. Unfortunately, it does not seem at all likely that Ezekiel was old enough for battle, or for marriage, being but 15 years of age.

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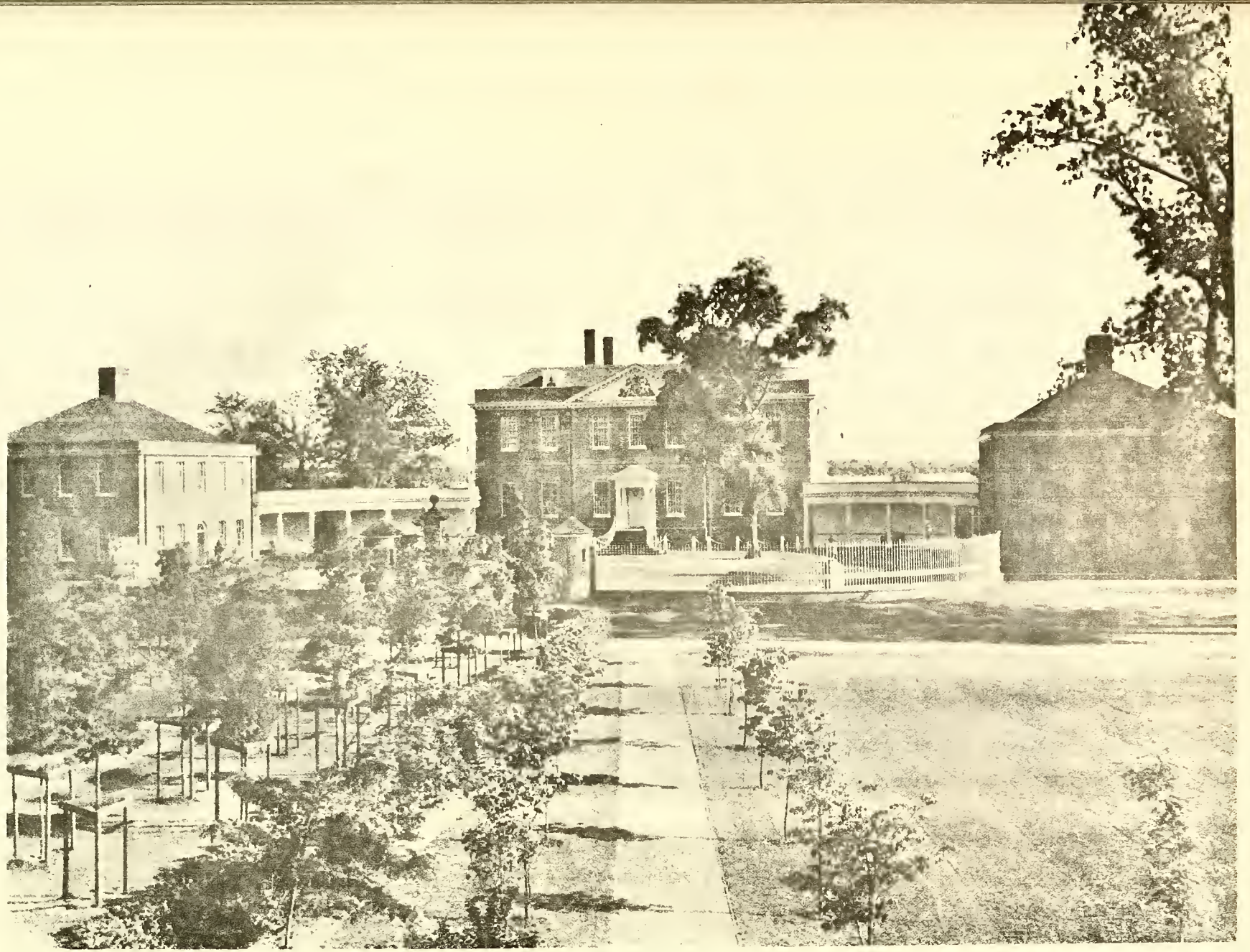
ILLUSTRATIONS

1. Tryon Palace in New Bern, North Carolina: A Symbol of Divisional Contention for a Time (Courtesy of Tryon Palace Commission).



2. The Attack Across Moores Creek Bridge (Diorama in Moores Creek Visitor Center).

3. Signatures of Some of the Patriot Principles

James Moore	John Ashe
Alexander Lillington	(The Lillington Crescent)*
James Kenan	Richard Caswell

*This silver crescent said to have been worn on the hat was sent for display at the Nation's Centennial Exhibition at Philadelphia in 1876 and was lost at that time. (Signatures and crescent from M.C.S. Noble, "The Battle of Moores Creek Bridge," The North Carolina Booklet, 3, No. 11 (Raleigh, 1904), 11, 16, 17, 19).

Jas Moore

John Ashe

Alex Lillington

Jno Harnett

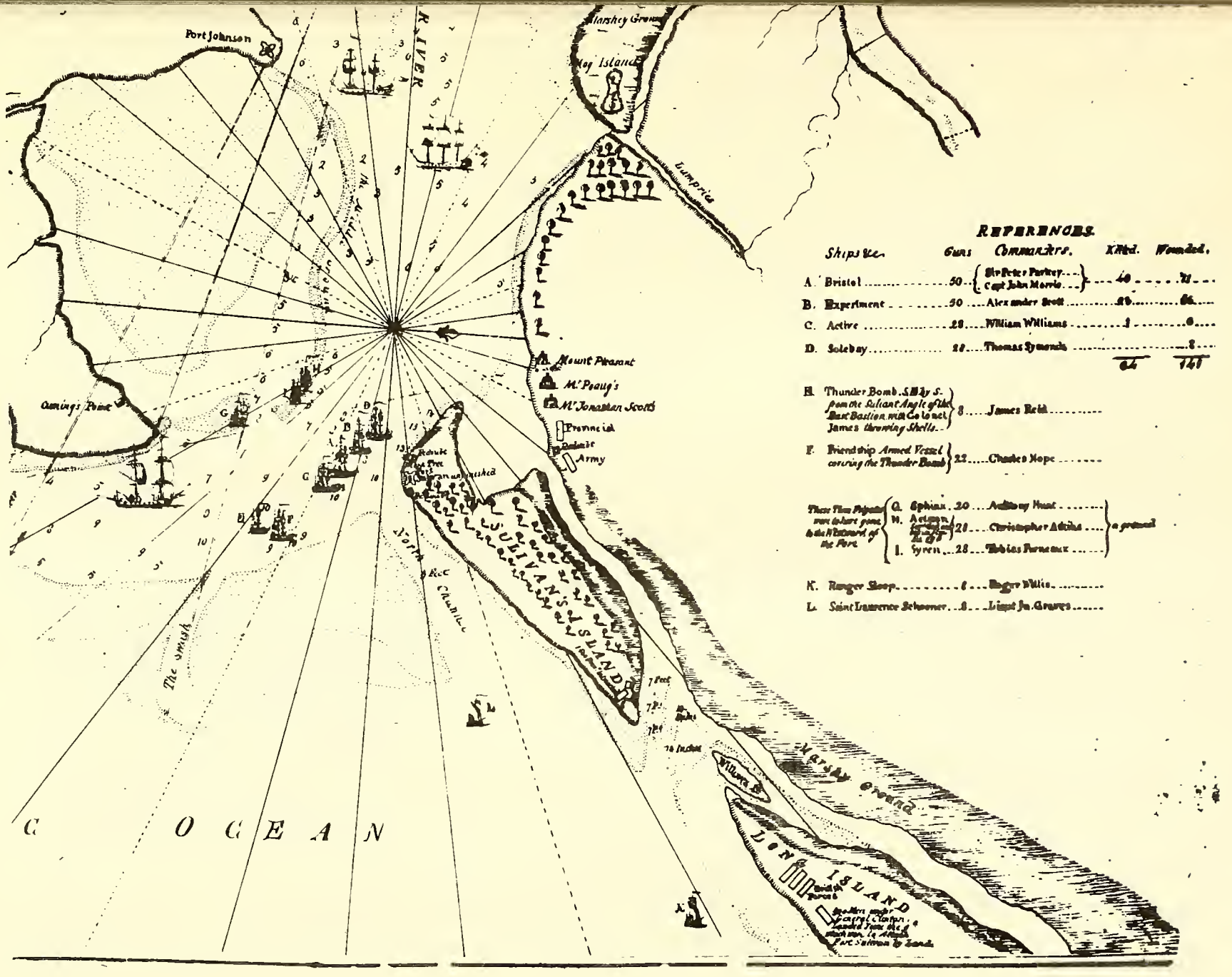
Jno Ashe

4. A Section of the Still Existing Moores Creek Entrenchment Erected by the Patriots.

5. A Cut Through the Now Softened (Worn) Original Entrenchment. This, done in February, 1938 by Historian Thor Borresen, shows (in dark earth line) the old ground level (A), the bottom of the moat, or ditch (B), and the rise toward the parapet (C). It was a slight work but it afforded protection. The bottom of the ditch was some three feet below ground line and the parapet some two feet above, offering five feet of elevation in the eight feet of slope from the low point of the one to the peak of the other.

A
B
C

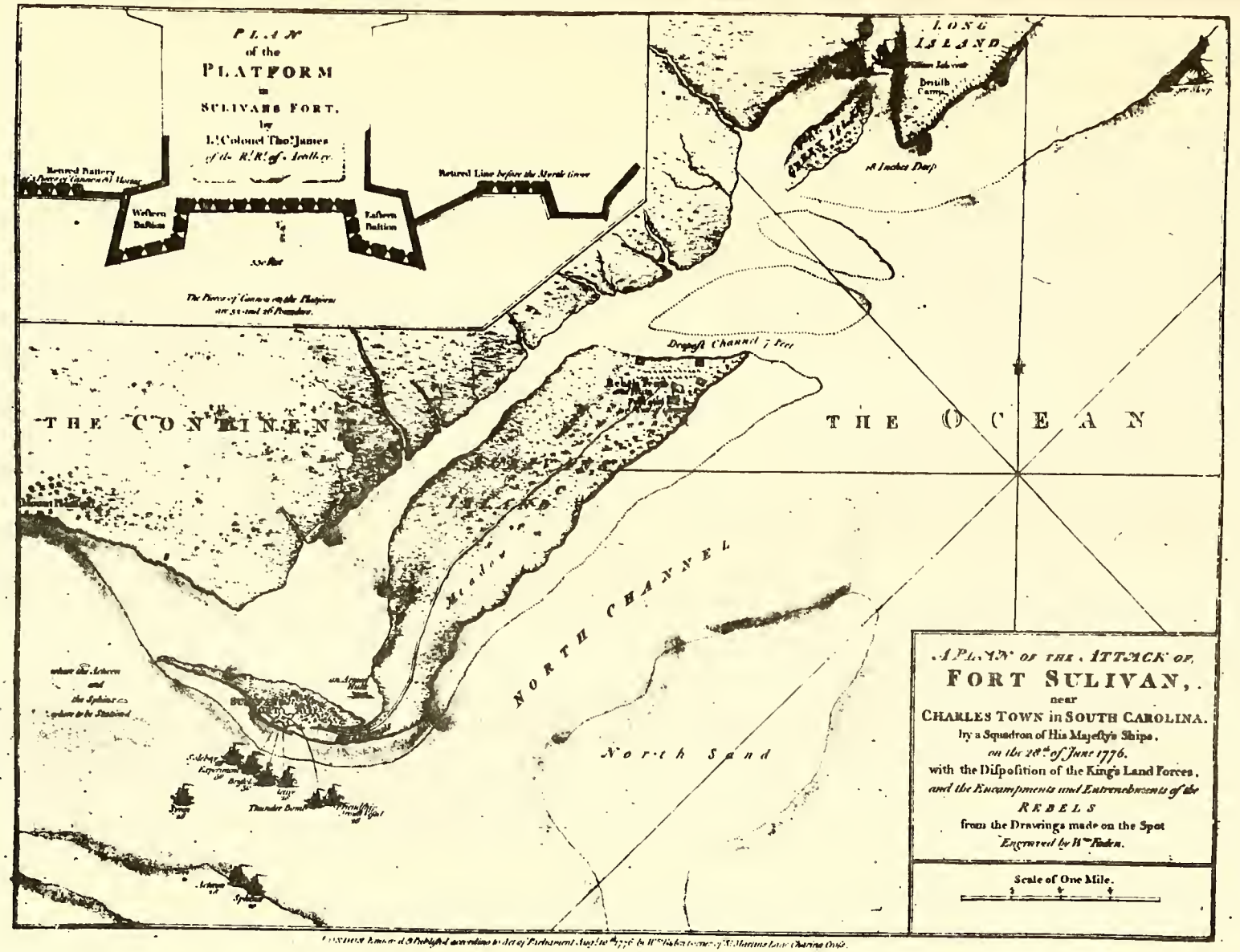
6. Section from "An Exact Plan of Charles Town Bar and Harbour from an Actual Survey: with the Attack of Fort Sulivan on the 28th of June by His Majesty's Squadron Commanded by Sir Peter Parker." Done in London, August 31, 1776, for Robert Sayer and John Bennett, "Map & Chart Sellers." (From copy in National Archives.)



REFERENCES.

	Ships &c.	Guns	Commanders.	Killed.	Wounded.
A.	Bristol	50	Sir Peter Parker, Capt. John Morris	40	71
B.	Experiment	50	Alexander Scott	23	66
C.	Active	28	William Williams	1	6
D.	Solebay	28	Thomas Symonds		8
				64	141
H.	Thunder Bomb. Shilly S. from the Saliant Angle of the East Bastion with Colonel James throwing Shells.	8	James Reid		
F.	Friendship Armed Vessel carrying the Thunder Boats	22	Charles Hope		
	These Three Frigates were to have gone to the Westward of the Fort				
G.	Sphinx	20	Anthony Hunt		
N.	Actæon	28	Christopher Atkins		a grounded
I.	Syren	28	Thomas Pennant		
K.	Ranger Sloop	6	Roger Willis		
L.	Saint Lawrence Schooner	8	Lieut. Jn. Graves		

7. "A Plan of the Attack on Fort Sulivan . . ." as engraved and published by William Faden, London, August 10, 1776, with supporting narrative (see Illustration No. 8 below).



London Printed & Published as the Act directs by Wm Faden Geographer to the Queen & Royal Family Charing Cross

To Commodore Sir Peter Parker Knt &c &c &c This Plan is Most humbly Dedicated & Presented by Lt Colonel Thos James R.t R.t of Artillery June 30.th 1776.

8. Narrative from the Faden Map and Broadside (see Illustration No. 7 above) of August 10, 1776.

LIST of his Majesty's Squadron commanded by Commodore Sir PETER PARKER, Knt. &c. on the Expedition against *Fort Sullivan* in *South-Carolina*.

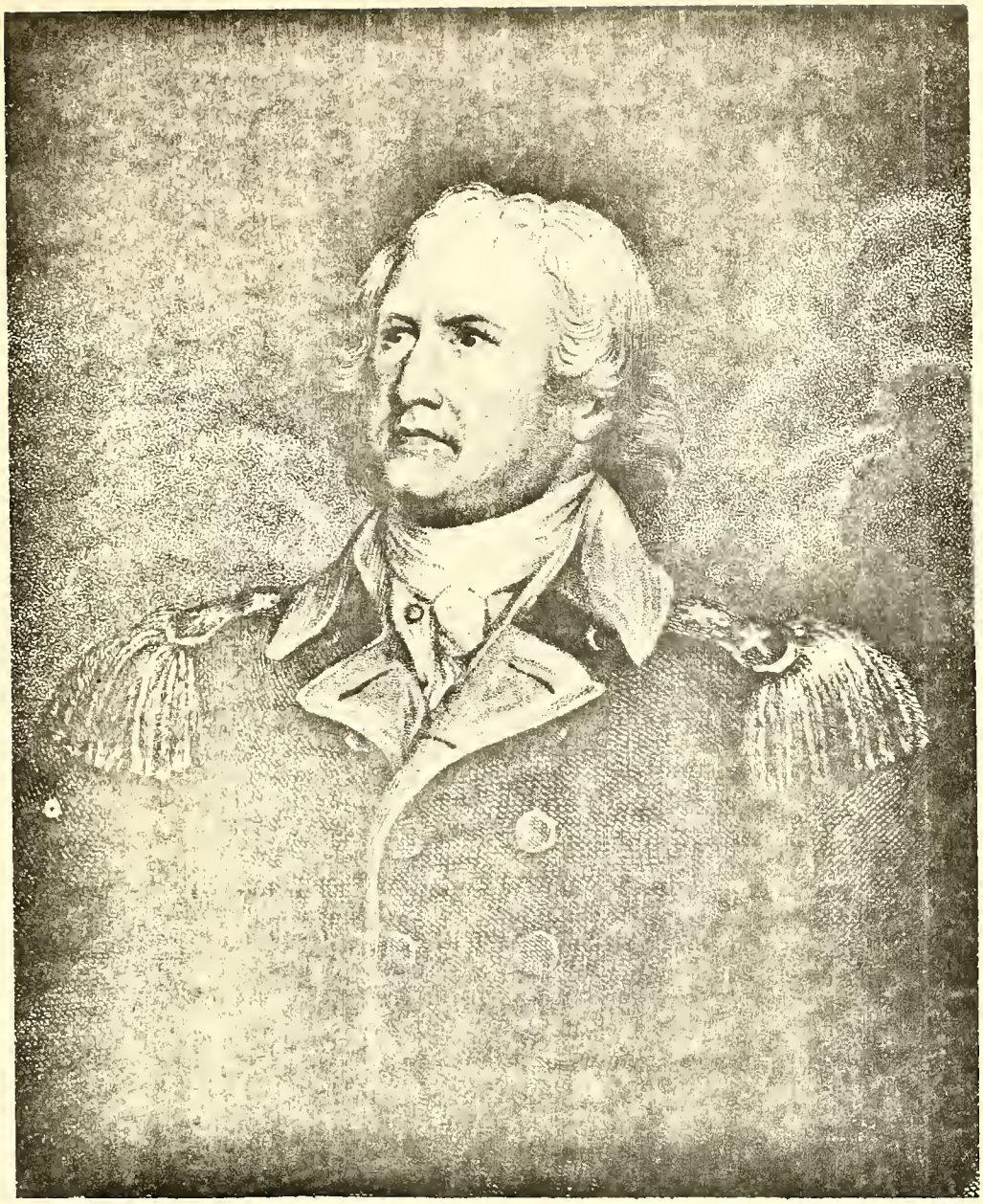
Ships.	Guns.	Commanders.
Bristol	50	Commodore Sir *Peter Parker*, Knt.
		Capt. *John Morris*.
Experiment	50	*Alexander Scott*.
Active	28	*William Williams*.
Sphynx	20	*Thomas Square*.
Acteon	28	*Christopher Atkins*.
Syren	28	*Felton Parkinson*.
Sphynx	20	*Anthony Hunt*.
Friendship arm'd vessel	28	*Charles Hope*.
Ranger sloop	8	*Roger Wills*.
Thunder bomb	8	*James Reid*.
St. Lawrence Schooner		*Lieut. John Griffith*.

The following Account of the Attack of FORT SULIVAN *is extracted from the Letters of Commodore Sir* PETER PARKER, *Knt. and Lieut. General* CLINTON, *to the Lords of the Admiralty.*

THE Commodore on his Arrival, finding it expedient to make an attempt on Charles-Town in South-Carolina, the fleet sailed from Cape Fear on the 16th of June, and on the 4th anchored off Charles Town Bar. The 5th sounded the Bar, and laid down buoys preparatory to the intended entrance of the harbour. The 9th all the frigates and most of the transports got over the Bar into *Five-Fathom Hole*. The 9th General Clinton landed on Long-Island with about four or five hundred men. The 10th the Bristol got over the Bar with little difficulty. The 13th the Commodore gave the Captains of the squadron his arrangement for the attack of the batteries on Sullivan's Island, and this next day he acquainted General *Clinton* that the ships were ready. The General fixed on the 28th for their joint attack, but the wind proving unfavourable prevented its taking effect. The 25th the Experiment arrived, and next day came over the Bar, when a new arrangement was made for the attack. The 28th, at half an hour after nine in the morning, General *Clinton* was informed by signal that the squadron was going on the attack. At half an hour after ten the signal was made to weigh; and about a quarter after eleven the Bristol, Experiment, Active, and Sobbey, brought up against the fort. The Thunder Bomb, covered by the Friendship armed vessel, brought the fullest Angle of the east bastion to bear N. W. by W. and Colonel *Moultrie* threw several shells a little before and during the engagement in a very good direction. The Sphynx, Acteon, and Syren were to have been to the westward, to prevent fire ships, or other vessels from annoying the ships engaged, to enfilade the works, and, if the rebels should be driven from them, to cut off their retreat; if possible. This last service was not performed, owing to the ignorance of the pilot, who ran the three frigates aground. The Sphynx and Syren got off in a few hours, but the Acteon remained fast till the next morning, when the Captain and Officers thought proper to scuttle and set her on fire.

A Court-martial was ordered on the Captain, Officers, and Company, of the *Acteon*, and they were honourably acquitted. During the time of the squadron being in front of the fort, which was near two hours, it was five times lapt up by the ships, with intervals, and they had the satisfaction, after being engaged two hours, to oblige the rebels to slacken their fire very much. Large parties were drove several times out of the fort, which were replaced by others from the camp. About half an hour after three, a considerable reinforcement from Mount Pleasant having crossed over in a way at the back of the fort, and it was imagined that the passage from Mount Pleasant being very near at

9. An Engraving of William Moultrie after a Portrait by Col. J. Trumbull. (From collections of the Library of Congress.)



MAJOR GENERAL WILLIAM MOULTRIE.

Will.m Moultrie

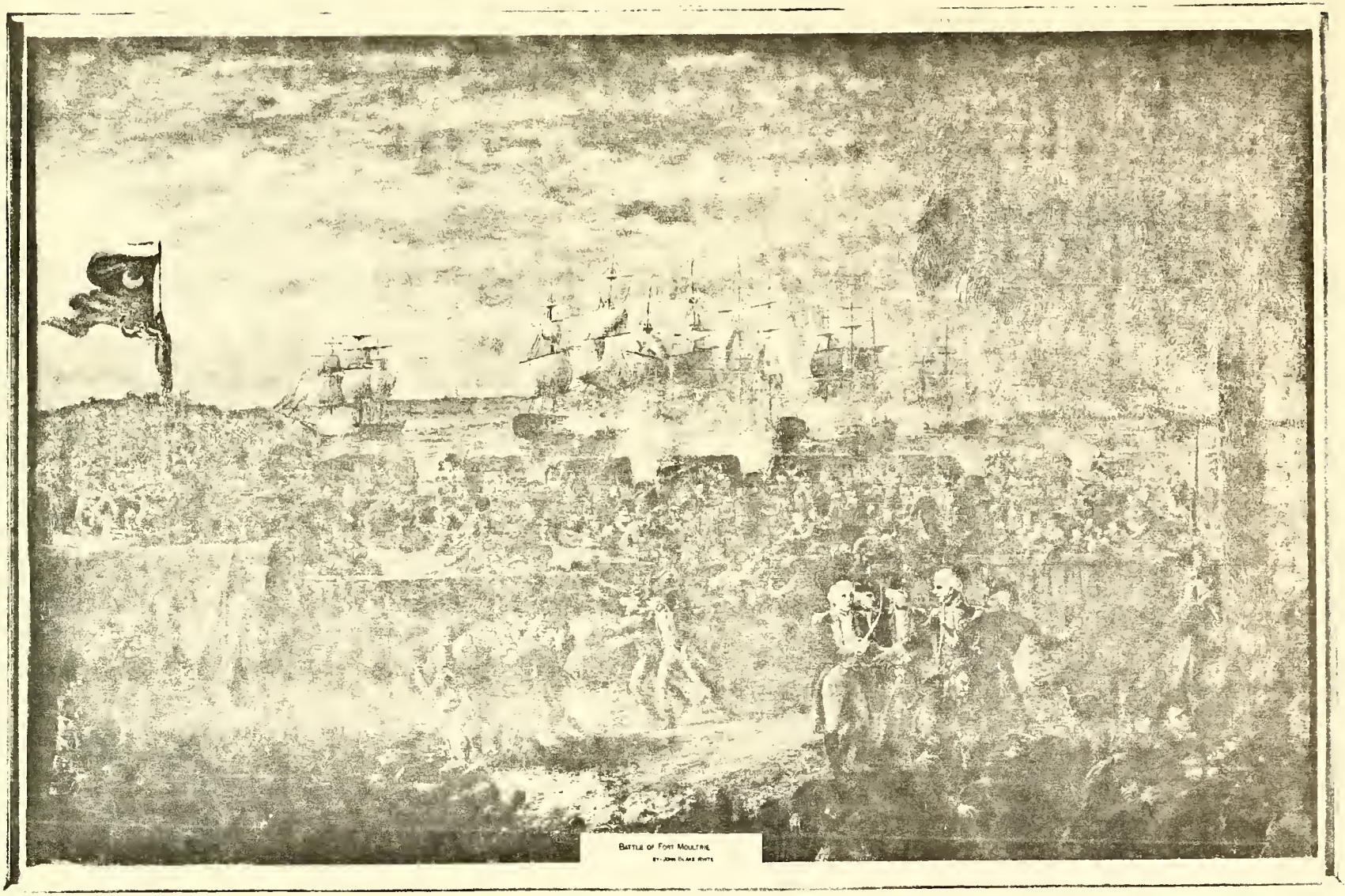
10. An Engraving of Sir Henry Clinton. (From the collections of the Library of Congress.)

ENGRAVED FOR THE SENATOR

Sir Henry Clinton

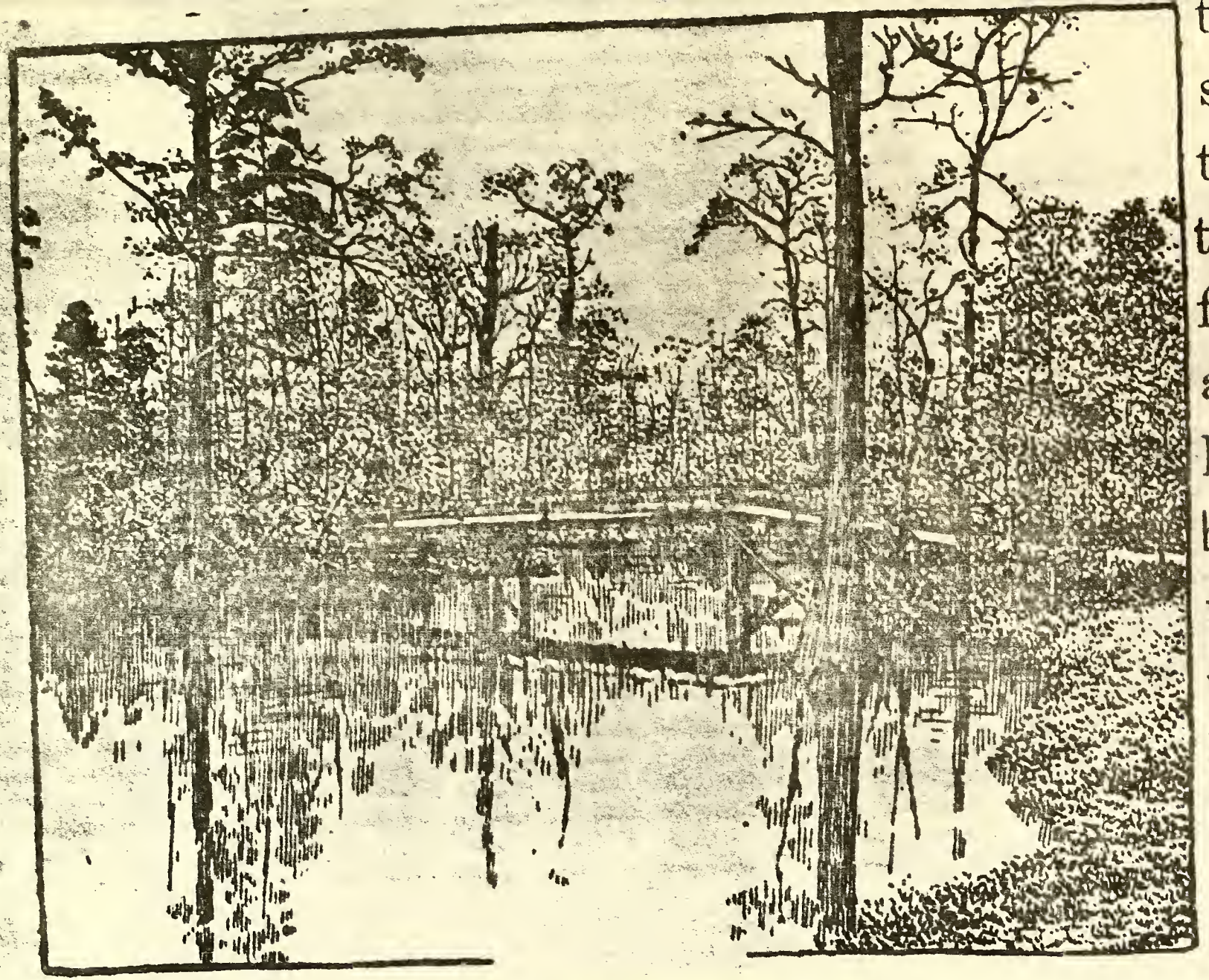
Drawn from Life by C Corbould, Engraved by Ch.ᵉ Warren, and Published
according to Act of Parliament, by C. Cooke, N.ᵒ 17 Paternoster-row Feb.ʸ 4 1791.

11. "The Battle of Fort Moultrie" by John Blake White. (With permission of the Architect of the Capitol, J. George Stewart, November 15, 1963.)



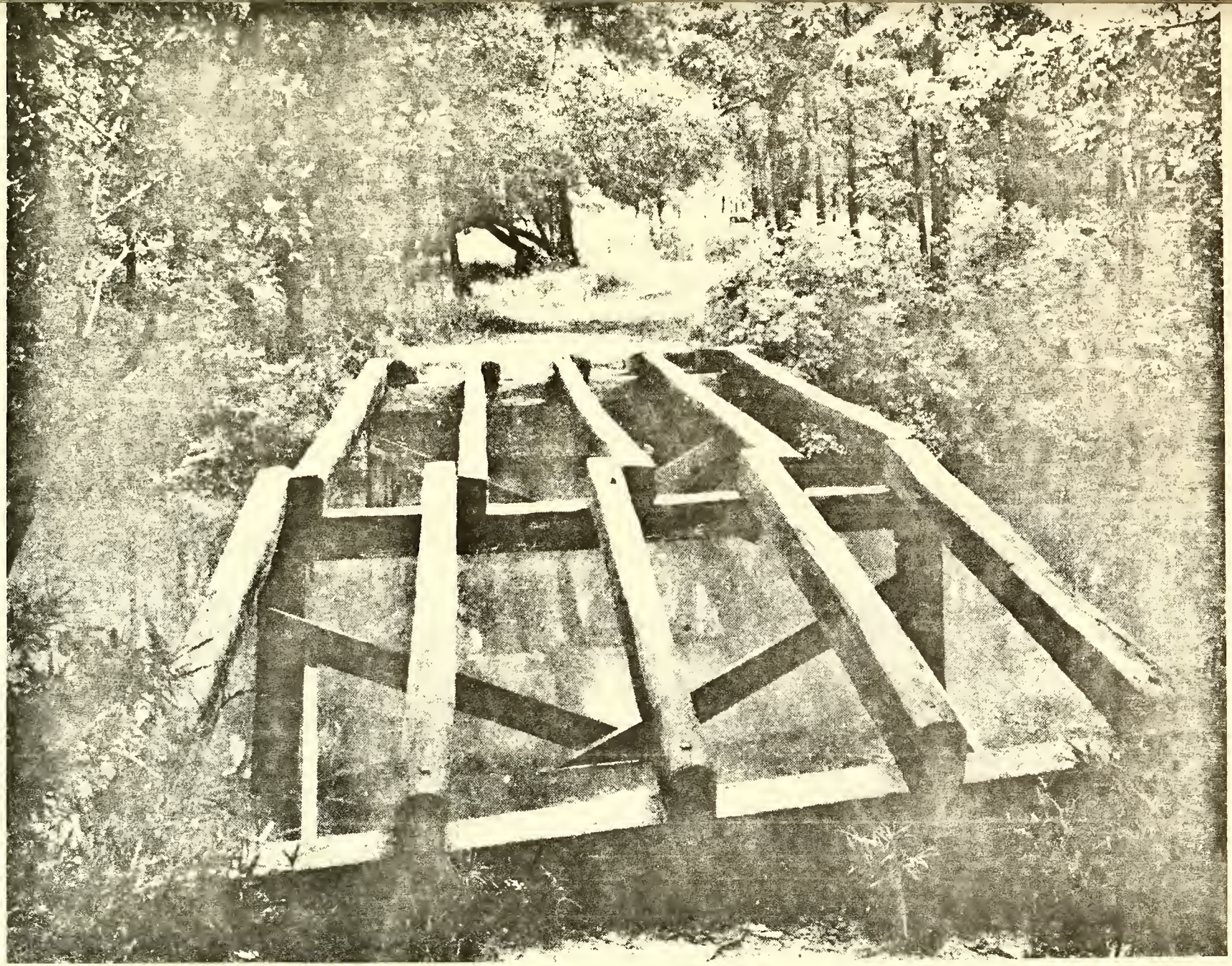
Battle of Fort Moultrie
By John Blake White

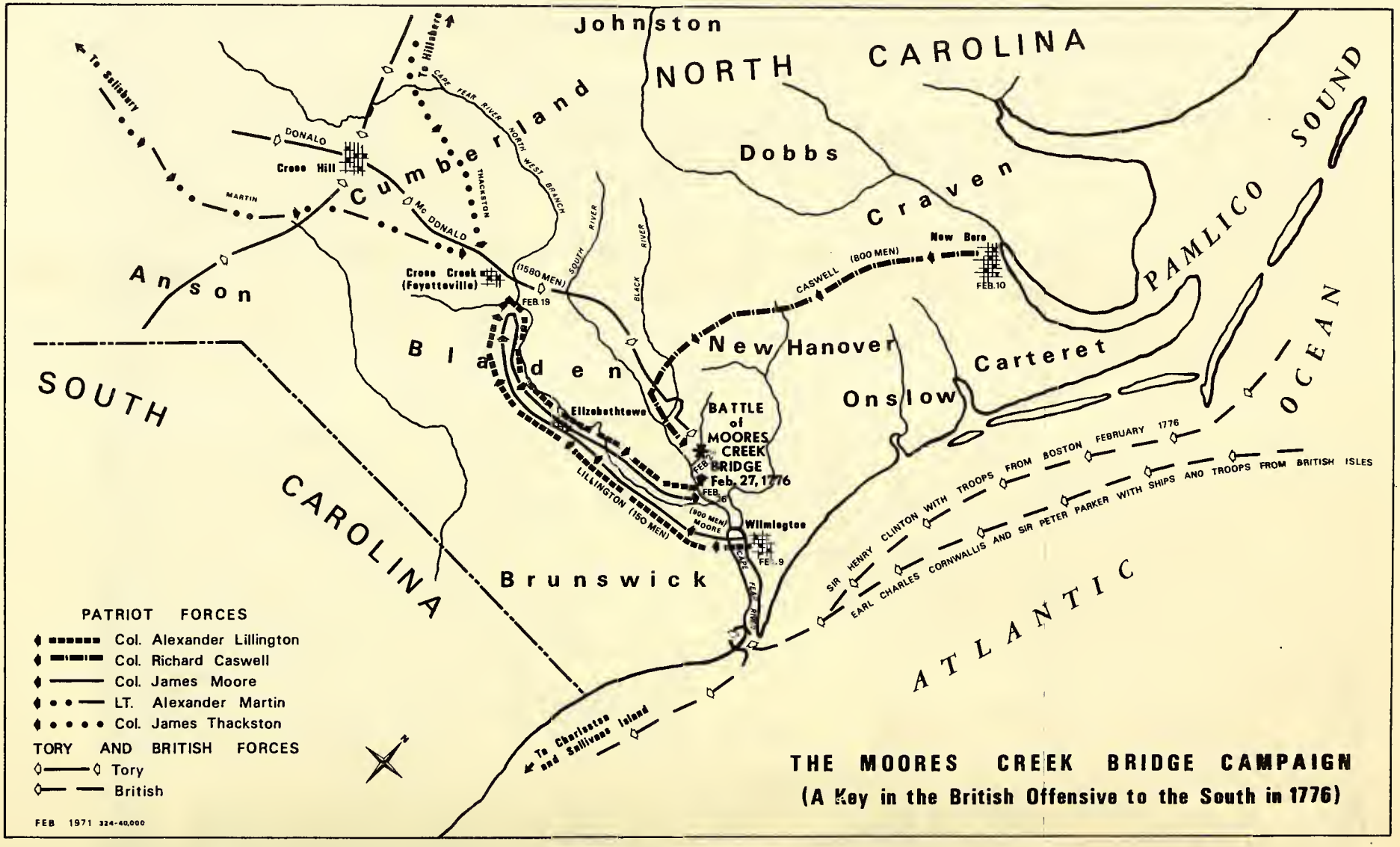
12. The Moores Creek Bridge that Was in Use in 1904. Periodic Flooding of the Creek Has Destroyed the Various Bridges Here. (From Noble, "The Battle of Moores Creek Bridge," p. 26.)



MOORE'S CREEK BRIDGE, 1904.

13. Moores Creek Bridge as It Was Reconstructed in 1936 and as It Existed for a Time.





THE MOORES CREEK BRIDGE CAMPAIGN

(A Key in the British Offensive to the South in 1776)